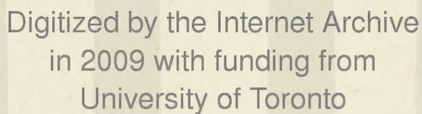
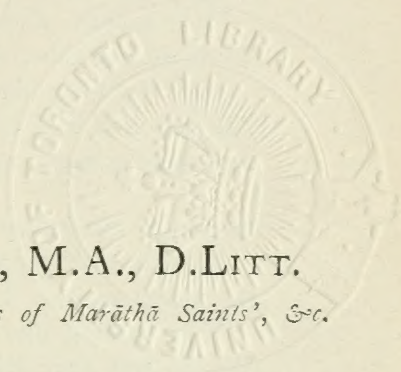

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2009 with funding from
University of Toronto

http://www.archive.org/details/makingofmodernin00macn

M 1695m

# THE MAKING OF MODERN INDIA



BY

NICOL MACNICOL, M.A., D.Litt.

*Author of 'Indian Theism', 'Psalms of Marāthā Saints', &c.*

196679
16. 6. 25.

HUMPHREY MILFORD
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
London Edinburgh Glasgow Copenhagen
New York Toronto Melbourne Cape Town
Bombay Calcutta Madras Shanghai
1924

WHILE the dews drop, while the grey turns to gold,
  'Mid tumult of men's wars,
Through the faint silence of the lingering day,
  And the long night of stars,—
All pale and still as death she sleeps her sleep,
And God's long watch we keep.

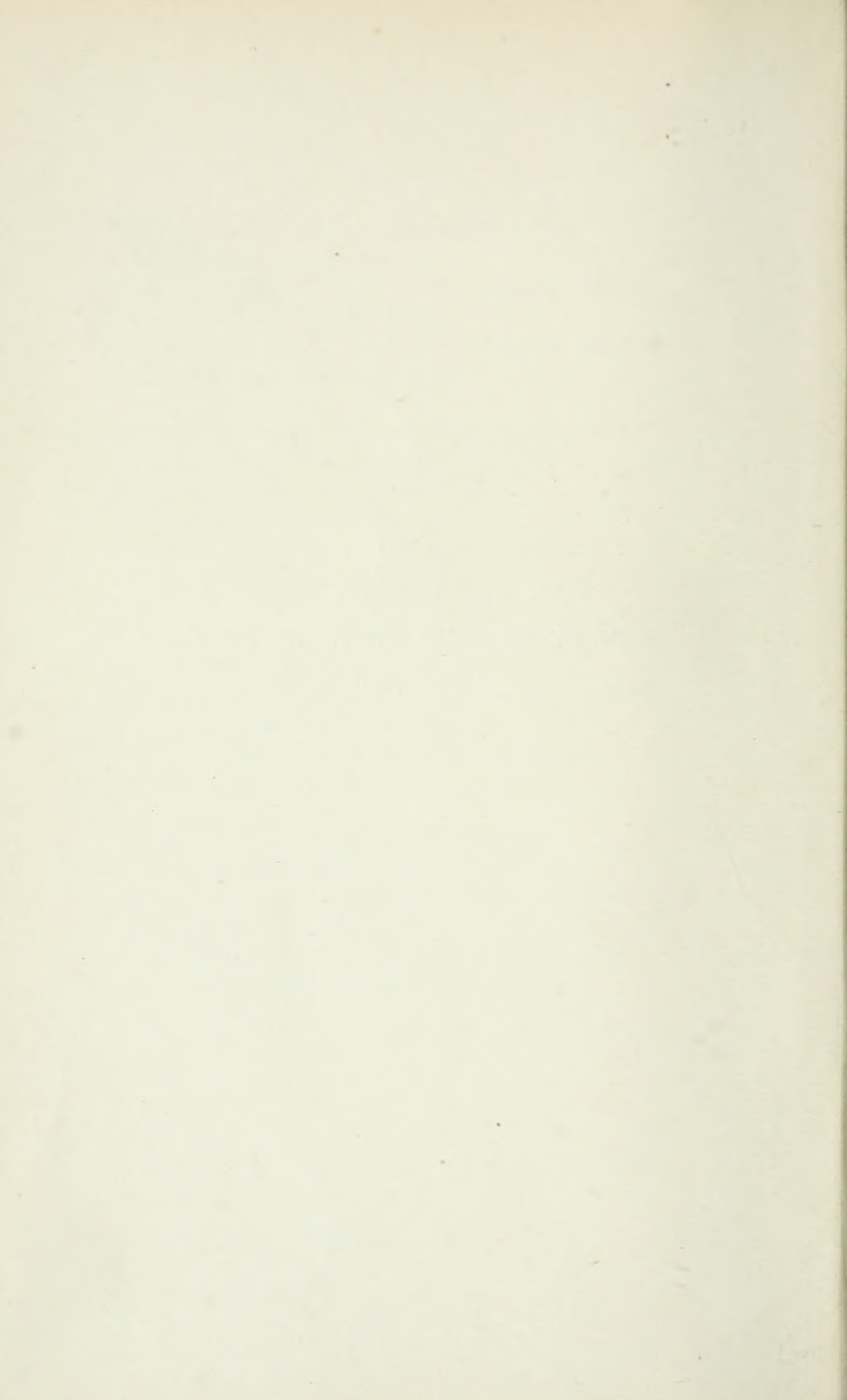
Our eyes are heavy with dull weariness,
  Leaden with slumbering,
So heavy and so dull we do not see
  Him coming like a king;
We do not hear His footfall by our side,—
The Bridegroom for His bride.

'Surely this sleep is death,' we say, 'the spells,
  'That keep her bound so long,
'Are stronger than our best enchantments are.'
  'There is one spell more strong.'
'Sure, life can ne'er be kindled in a clod.'
'Yea, by the kiss of God.'

Then India, trancèd, bound for centuries,
  Stirs at the whispered word;
Him our eyes saw not, e'en in sleep she knows
  For her predestined Lord.
Lo, at His touch the long enchantment breaks,
And she who slept awakes.

Printed in England

TO
THE CHURCH OF CHRIST
THAT IS AND THAT IS TO BE
IN INDIA



# PREFACE

THE aim of this book is to provide some material by which to estimate the character of the forces that are making the new India, and the direction in which these forces are carrying her. They are of many kinds—political, social, religious. Some of the most powerful are the ancient forms of thought and of belief which modern influences are modifying but by no means eliminating. At the centre of all these, influencing them and influenced by them, are those outstanding personalities, Indian in the texture of their minds and souls, who are leading their people into the unknown land of to-morrow. To conjecture what that future will be, to help in any way in forecasting what under wise guidance it may be,—these are fascinating and baffling tasks. The fascination of them is not always realized as it should be by the British people upon whom lies the duty of undertaking them and so of opening a way for the advance together of England and India, as comrades and friends,

> With minds firm fixed upon the road
> To freedom—road that ne'er can weary one.

This book seeks to help towards that end.

Some of the chapters of which the book is composed were originally published in the form of articles in reviews,

and in such cases the date of the original publication, where that has any significance for their contents, is noted. Grateful acknowledgement of permission to reprint has to be made to the publishers of the reviews in which the articles appeared. Thus Chapters II, V, and VI originally appeared in the *Contemporary Review*; Chapter III in the *Atlantic Monthly*; Chapter IV in the *Hibbert Journal*; Chapters VII, IX, and X in the *Expositor*; Chapters VIII, XIV, and XV in the *International Review of Missions*; Chapter XII in the *Young Men of India*; Chapter XVI in *The East and the West*; and Chapter XVII in the London *Times* (Empire Number).

NICOL MACNICOL.

*July* 1924.

# CONTENTS

PAGE

I. Introductory . . . . . . . . 1

## PART I

### POLITICAL PROGRESS

II. The Situation in 1908 . . . . . . 5
III. The Situation in 1923 . . . . . . 17

## PART II

### SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS UNREST

IV. The Conflict of Religions . . . . . . 37
V. Tides of the Spirit . . . . . . . 53
VI. Indian Ideals and Present-day Realities . . . 71

## PART III

### IDEAS

VII. Hinduism as Mysticism . . . . . . 85
VIII. Hindu Devotion . . . . . . . 100
IX. Transmigration and *Karma* and their Influence in Living Hinduism . . . . . . 115
X. The Hindu Ideal of a Holy Life . . . . 126
XI. Hinduism and the Way to God . . . . 138

## PART IV

### PERSONALITIES

PAGE

XII. Indian Women Poets . . . . . . 154
XIII. Rājā Rām Mohun Roy . . . . . . 171
XIV. Devendranath Tagore . . . . . . 189
XV. Some Notable Indian Christians . . . 195

## PART V

### UNCHANGING INDIA

XVI. Two Cults of Popular Hinduism . . . 213
XVII. The Diversions of an Indian Villager . . . 227

# I. INTRODUCTORY

THE future of India, whether in her political relationships or in her wider relations with the universe, presents a perplexing problem to the student of our time. Nowhere else in the world of to-day do we find a parallel situation to that of this land at once so highly civilized and so primitive, so rich and so poor, so wise and so ignorant, so capable and so incapable of guiding her own destiny, so enamoured of freedom and yet so bound by chains of her own forging. Such lands as China and Japan may resemble India in some or all of these respects; the peculiar element in her case that gives it its uniqueness and its special interest for us of the West arises from her close association with a European people and with the civilization which they bring to bear upon her.

Few have studied the problem of India with such knowledge and such imaginative insight as Sir Alfred Lyall. Many years ago he described England's function in that country as being 'to superintend the tranquil elevation of the whole moral and intellectual standard'.[1] 'All that the English need do', he wrote, 'is to keep the peace and clear the way. Our vocation just now is to mount guard over India in the transitional period which may be expected to follow, much as we used to station a company

[1] *Asiatic Studies*, vol. i, p. 327.

of soldiers to keep order at Jagannāth's festival in the days of the East India Company. Jagannāth himself may be safely left exposed to the rising tide of that intellectual advancement which the people must certainly work out for themselves if they only keep pace and have patience.' A generation has passed since these words were written, and to those who to-day are seeking to pierce the darkness that hides the future of India it seems that the rôle of England must be changed. 'We believe', wrote the authors of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report in 1918, 'that the time has now come when the sheltered existence which we have given India cannot be prolonged without damage to her national life, . . . that the placid, pathetic contentment of the masses is not the soil on which Indian nationhood will grow and that in deliberately disturbing it we are working for her highest good.' The authors of the Report realized that a change was coming which it would be well for Great Britain to anticipate and to encourage. Tranquillity was past; a storm was gathering. Rabindranath Tagore describes in his *Reminiscences* how in his early life he, like so many others, grew weary of 'keeping pace and having patience'. 'Much rather, I said to myself, would I be an Arab Bedouin!' The new situation, of which there were signs then in the sky and in men's hearts, is upon us to-day with its perils and its perplexities. Spiritual forces that for long, as they flowed in upon the land, exercised a silent, leavening influence, have now begun, enormously quickened in their activity by the war and its effects, to cause upheavals and convulsions. Though Mr. Gandhi is profoundly Hindu in his spirit, he is a very different figure from that of the 'ascetic and sceptic' that represented to Sir Alfred Lyall the ultimate element

in Hinduism. The power he has exerted and still exerts, allied with other disruptive forces, is affecting the outlook of every class and causing deep fissures in the ancient structure of Hindu society. Those voices that Lord Curzon heard so many years ago 'reverberating through the whispering galleries of the East' are still speaking with persuasion to multitudes in India and, though the old is far from being forgotten, it has become mingled indissolubly with the new.

In order to conjecture the direction of India's future it is necessary to know something of her past and of the character and ideals of her people. The heritage that has come down to her has maintained through all the changes of the centuries a deeply-rooted consistency. Religion has always been that which has seemed to her people the principal thing in the universe and towards its explanation of life's meaning and its consolations in life's sorrows their eyes are instinctively directed. To endeavour, therefore, to understand what India will be to-morrow without taking into account what her religion was yesterday and is to-day would be a very futile occupation. We are onlookers at the break-up of a very ancient civilization, buttressed by deeply grounded religious convictions. There is perhaps no civilization that the world has seen so compacted of every strengthening element that religion, tradition, custom can supply, as is that of India. Inevitably the process of its break-up will be slow, and inevitably it will be accompanied by earth tremors, volcanic convulsions, seismic upheavals. What it will ultimately be transformed to,—whether what will emerge at the last will be a new and nobler order or a heap of dust,—who can prophesy?

In an ancient Hebrew scripture a prophet tells how in

a vision he saw a valley filled with dead men's bones, bleached and dry. Then a voice was heard—'Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live.' Thereupon the winds of new life came and the dead rose up, living and breathing, 'an exceeding great army'. The breath of new life is blowing from the four winds upon India and one cannot but believe that this people is being begotten again to a great future. Though dust and decay and the night of ignorance have wrapped her about for centuries, her soul has never died,—a greatly aspiring and a deeply brooding soul. There is in a poem by a Bengali poetess a description that seems a parable of India's situation in this hour of her renaissance:

> Lo, where the bird at rest
> Twitters in careless ease upon her nest.
> Throughout all storm wherewith the loud tree swings
> Broods in the sky-flier's breast the pride of wings.[1]

'Careless ease' scarcely describes the mood of India to-day amid the storms that shake her, but those who have had some glimpse into her deep heart are confident that she is a 'sky-flier' and that there 'broods in the sky-flier's breast the pride of wings'.

[1] *Poems by Indian Women.* Edited by Margaret Macnicol. (Heritage of India Series.) p. 95.

# PART I

# POLITICAL PROGRESS

## II. THE SITUATION IN 1908[1]

OF all the books that have been written about India during the last fifty years there are two that exhibit more than any others a sense of the gravity of the problem that faces Britain in that country. What Sir Alfred Lyall and Mr. Meredith Townsend foresaw yesterday there is no one but is aware of to-day. *Asiatic Studies* and *Asia and Europe* when they appeared were considered sombre books, their outlook unduly pessimistic. Was not India 'the brightest jewel in the British crown'? Was not its administration the most efficient in the world? The voice of India's discontent, the gathering stir and tumult of its restlessness, was not yet loud enough to reach the ear of England, and few cared to heed the warnings of men who had heard and understood as they had. Both of them alike viewed the future of the British rule in India with serious foreboding. 'After fifty years' study of the subject', says Mr. Townsend, 'I do not believe that, with the possible exception of a single movement, Europe has ever permanently influenced Asia, and I cannot help doubting whether in the future it ever will.' And, again, 'The idea of the European tranquilly guiding,

[1] Published in July 1908.

controlling, and perfecting the Asiatic until the worse qualities of his organization have gone out of him, though the noblest dream ever dreamed by man, is but a dream after all. Asia, which survived the Greek and the Roman and the Crusader, will survive also the Teuton and the Slav.' No one who has read the sombre words in which, twenty-five years ago, Sir Alfred Lyall described the vision of India's destiny that the shadows of the future seemed to him to hide, can have forgotten them or can have failed to recall them in view of the disquieting outlook of to-day. 'It may be that those are right who insist that Asia has always been too deep a quicksand for Europe to build upon it any lasting edifice of morals, politics, or religion; that the material conditions forbid any lasting improvement; that the English legions, like the Roman, will tramp across the Asiatic stage and disappear, and that the clouds of confusion and superstition will roll up again.' To-day, in the face of the complex and perhaps insoluble problems that India presents to her foreign ruler, those gloomy vaticinations recur, and one wonders whether after all they are right, and whether the task England has undertaken is too great for her, whether 'the one immovable figure' on the Indian landscape is that of the 'Hindu ascetic and sceptic' who believes nothing, hopes nothing, and fears nothing.

These are thoughts and forebodings that haunt one perhaps more in the mysterious East than elsewhere, and they will probably be dismissed with uncomprehending contempt by the confident Imperialist. Nevertheless, there are things, in India at least, that not those 'civilizing forces', the railway and the telegraph, nor equal laws, nor even the most scientific tariff is likely to compass. It was in an Eastern desert that the words were spoken,

'Man shall not live by bread alone', and perhaps nowhere is their deep truth fully realized except when they are uttered, as they were then by Christ, and as they might be to-day by so many millions in India, from the midst of famine and of daily need. Less perhaps in India than anywhere is the gift of merely material prosperity likely to satisfy. But in India, whether or not the country as a whole, as some maintain, is growing richer, there can be little question that for the great mass of its inhabitants distress and hunger are no farther from them to-day than they were of old. Apart altogether from those subtler hindrances that seemed to Mr. Townsend and Sir Alfred Lyall, and that seem to many still, to make the task of Britain in India so baffling and so uncertain of success, there are concrete and insistent facts that it requires no insight to detect. It is not that we have not won the hearts of this people; we have not even satisfied their hunger. The one aim that Britain sets before herself in the government of lands like India and Egypt is the bringing to them of a material content. If she has failed to accomplish that she can boast of no success. And certainly in India she has not succeeded. There is nothing more painfully evident than that, in the midst of trials of every kind that seem year by year to increase in this distressful country, the power of resistance on the part of the people has shown no sign of growing greater. The statement that plague is due to poverty is one of those half-truths that are as misleading as a whole untruth. Better to call it a visitation of God. But plague and famine and all the many ills of India find still to-day, even after fifty years of British rule, a people the great bulk of whom, in the words of Mr. G. K. Gokhale, 'go down the precipice' at the first touch of calamity.

It may be that this is inevitable,—that it is the judgement of heaven and not the fault of England. It may be so, but none the less she has failed in her purpose and must be content to bear the blame. Without question, a great part of the Indian discontent has its root in this material need. The British Government has never claimed to supply its Indian subjects with spiritual consolations, and if it cannot bake their bread it can do nothing for them. The bonds that bind them to it are its power to protect, its power to feed. India does not realize that she is protected; she knows bitterly that she is not fed.

It would be a complete mistake to suppose that the discontent in India is either limited to certain classes or that it is the product of agitation. It is as widespread and as deep in the land as are its poverty and its hunger. No doubt in the educated classes the hunger is not for bread, but—a no less natural appetite—for place and power. The feeling of discontent that this produces is indeed largely unreasoning and unreasonable, but it exists and it is inevitable, especially when the Government that seems to send prosperity or adversity is one in which the people bear no share. Alien benefactors may be endured. If they are still alien and appear as well to be malefactors, their yoke becomes intolerable. Sympathy will not save us, for sympathy will not stay the pangs of appetite. To do this is England's *métier* in India. If she succeeds in it she may still fail, for deeper reasons, in her greater task. If she fails in it she fails in everything.

It is this fact that makes the discontent so widespread and so deep. There is no village so remote, no villager so humble, but there and on his bowed shoulders the burden presses heavier year by year, and as he feels it

his heart is bitter against those who lay it on him. It would be the same whoever were his lords, Brāhman or British. The difference is that what in other days was dumb has found a voice, and it is far other than it ever was before and far more formidable just because it is articulate. Those who have given to it speech and made this difference are the upper and the educated classes, aware of their rights and more than aware of their wrongs, chafing, as it is inevitable that they should, at their own helplessness. They have not created the discontent, but they, by the fact that they express it, have given it a power that cannot be neglected or ignored. They give the movement its direction and utter its demand. The British administrator may often feel, and truly, that he cares more for the common people and for their sorrows than do many of their Brāhman champions. But his sympathy is of little avail so long as it does not make the harvest grow. He and not the Brāhman is the author of their woes.

The dissatisfaction of the higher classes is of a less instinctive order than this unreasoned discontent. As has been said, they know all their rights and more than all their wrongs. Injustice, when it is done, as it is done even in British Courts, is no longer done in a corner. Every incident of the kind is fuel for a growing resentment. And to be aware of one's rights but helpless to exercise them,—there is no situation in which ill-will rankles with so poisonous a wound. There are few who do not conceal scars from the coarse hand of some one of the ruling race, presuming on his power and on their subjection. One marvels often at their patience. It is comparatively easy for the British ruler to be a father to his people, to help them, to care for them in their trouble,

to condescend to them. But to be a brother, to acknowledge their equality, and to share instead of bestowing rights,—that he finds far harder. *Noblesse oblige* has been, on the whole, the motto that has guided the Englishman in his relation with dependent races, and in that lies the secret of his successful rule. Even now the Anglo-Indian official is happiest when he can turn his back upon the strife of Brāhman tongues, resolute as he moves among the common people to do justly and to love mercy. But the day of patriarchal government in India, which suited so well the temper of the ruler,—at once gratifying his pride and displaying the kindness of his heart,—that day is past in the case of a considerable proportion of the population. What he would bestow generously of his bounty he gives with a bad grace as a due. He finds it harder to be merely just than to be generous.

It is these two facts, the hunger of the common people and the hauteur of the foreign ruler, that have brought the administration of India to the present crisis. To diagnose its sources is not difficult; what is harder is to prophesy its development or to prescribe a remedy. The present direction, indeed, of that development one must be blind not to perceive. When last Christmas the National Congress broke up in disorder at Surat many people hoped and believed that that incident marked the opening of a new era in the political history of India. Surely, it was argued, the methods of Mr. B. G. Tilak and his fellow irreconcilables are discredited, and the National Congress will now be able to begin a new period in its history, purged of its violent and impracticable elements, as the recognized intermediary between the Government and the people. Those who thought so then are not so sure that that will be the result to-day. The

months that have elapsed since the Surat crisis give no indication that the party of extremism is discredited in the eyes of the people, or that Mr. Tilak has become a spent force in the public life of India. On the contrary, one Provincial Conference after another has revealed the views he represents as in the ascendant. Energy and resolution are capturing on every hand the imagination of the people, while counsels of moderation leave them cold. Weary with uttering futile prayers to unresponsive gods, sick with hope so long deferred, the waverers, those who have taken hitherto a middle course, are being attracted in ever-increasing numbers to what is able now to claim to be the popular party.

The name Moderate and the temper it describes bring no appeal to the young and to the ardent. Such a watchword may satisfy the middle-aged, the prudent, the far-seeing. It will not stir enthusiasm ; it will not rally the people to its cause. Neither party can indeed truly claim to be democratic in the Western sense of the word. A recent vernacular publication in enumerating the basal principles of Hinduism repudiates the 'Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity' of the French Revolution, and represents it as distinctly opposed to the levelling teaching of Christianity. There is no social system more haughtily aristocratic than that of Hinduism, no religion bound up so intimately with class distinctions. As has been already indicated, in the case of the great body of the people their political views are as yet mainly negative. They have no theory as to how their condition may be bettered, but they cherish a scarcely articulate resentment against those who seem to them to blame because it is so bad. The party to which the nearest approximation to the term democratic can be

applied in India is that which voices most energetically this resentment, which identifies itself with the people's grievances and denounces most unsparingly the supposed oppressor. Statesmanship and a positive and practical policy are rather hindrances than a help in accomplishing this end. Crude denunciation in the columns of a vernacular newspaper has more effect than many a weighty appeal in the Viceroy's Council. The astute and far-seeing politician has little power over the people's hearts compared with the martyr who has languished in their cause in British jails.

When the Surat Congress was shattered the *Bande Mataram*, the leading extremist organ in Calcutta, broke forth into a paean of triumph over what it claimed as the vindication of the popular cause. Ransacking his memory in search of anything in English literature that might convey his feelings, the editor lighted upon these lines :

> Sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea,
> Jehovah hath triumphed, His people are free.

The strange 'Jehovah' of this popular deliverance is Mr. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who typifies the extremist attitude in its strength and in its weakness, as Mr. G. K. Gokhale does that of the Moderates. While both are Brāhmans of the purest blood, the one is a demagogue, the other a statesman. To call Mr. Tilak a demagogue is not to depreciate his ability, which is great, nor the courage and energy of his character. He owns and edits the vernacular newspaper that has by far the widest circulation and the most commanding influence in Western India. He is not the only one of the extremist leaders who has sealed the sincerity of his convictions by going to prison for them. He is at all times open and accessible

to any one who cherishes a grievance, and the great stores of his sorely-earned legal knowledge are at their disposal. Among his own people in Poona he is absolutely supreme, and when they are stirred the cry of 'Tilak Maharaj-ke jaya' is even oftener upon their lips than that in honour of the old Maratha hero, Śivaji, of whom many of them would say that his successor to-day is an incarnation. Brāhman as he is, Mr. Tilak commands the people's hearts because he is a man of impulse and of enthusiasm, and because, it has to be added, he shares, or appears at least to share, in their prejudices and their superstitions.

Mr. Gokhale, on the other hand,—and in this he largely represents his party,—is too far aloof from the people to be able ever greatly to influence them. He may sympathize with their distress, but his sympathy never dominates him. His methods are not the familiar Oriental ones of his rival. They are the methods of the West, and are those best adjusted to move an authority so cold and passionless as the British bureaucracy. Mr. Gokhale certainly sees farther than Mr. Tilak, and wisely adjusts his means to ends that are practicable and attainable. No one who realizes the seriousness of the Indian situation can question for a moment that it would be infinitely for the better alike for India and England if both would hearken to this mediator and the party of compromise that he represents, and cease either on the one hand crying for the moon or on the other endeavouring to sweep back a tide that the moon alone controls. The way of wisdom for the overlord in India surely is to strengthen in every just and honourable way the representatives of reason and of moderation. The way of folly is that of a Government that wraps itself in

its haughty isolation and, believing itself to be moved only by a desire for the people's good, is indifferent to what the people think. It is not enough that we should be convinced that we are governing in the interest of the Indian population. Before it can be in the fullest sense their interest they must be convinced. The best of Governments falls short of good if it is government in despite of the people. If Britain is content to fill this rôle let it go on its way strengthening, as it is doing, the party of intransigeance and of Mr. Tilak. Or, if not, ere it is too late, let it grapple to itself by generous concession the party of statesmanship and of moderation. Delays and hesitations and half-heartedness in this matter are peculiarly dangerous. No one who knows the spirit of the present time in India can fail to realize that events are precipitating themselves with continually increasing speed towards a crisis, and that the opportunity that now offers is in imminent danger of being lost. As Mr. Gokhale warned the Imperial Council a few weeks ago, the moving finger writes.

If this opportunity is lost and that crisis comes, there will, of course, be no serious outbreak. There may be no token at all to the uninstructed that anything untoward has occurred. But will Britain be content to rule with strong hand over a sullen and resentful people? There is, it is true, a scheme of contemplated reforms at present before the country and about to be submitted for his final decision to the Secretary of State. But it has failed to satisfy in any degree the popular demands and aspirations. The main principle on which it rests at once arouses suspicion. It is believed, however unjustly, that its aim is to intensify the prejudices of class and of religion that in the divided house the foreigner may rule.

The whole spirit and desire of awakened India is to weld its diverse peoples into one. And further, reforms can awaken no interest and no enthusiasm that bestow, with however much parade, only the shadow and not the substance of authority. Unlimited liberty to advise, when advice is despised and ignored, will never satisfy those who covet the reality of power. Nor are such half-measures likely to serve any fruitful or effective purpose. The Government will only cease to be alien, and so to be distrusted, as a responsible share in its entire administration is given to the people of the land. A frank and generous recognition of this is what is peremptorily needed. Lord Cromer has warned us that in no circumstances can a feeling of loyalty be awakened to a foreign government. But without loyalty there can be no true citizenship, no established State. The wise course to be followed in such circumstances surely is to make plain at every moment that the alien authority is provisional, and to keep every door open to indigenous capacity wherever that may be found. It must be made possible, as far as may be, for the Indian to feel increasingly in regard to the government that makes or mars his lot that, even if it is a poor thing, it is his own.

That is the direction in which Mr. Morley should advance 'with firm, courageous, and intrepid step', for it is the direction indicated at once by the honour of England and the safety of India. There is a great tradition in the land, not yet wholly lost, enjoining reverence for the *guru*, the spiritual teacher, and it is some such feeling that successive generations of educated Indians have had for Mr. John Morley. It is pathetic now to see that reverence fading and to forecast how soon, unless he hastens the philosophic leisure of his

pace, the idol of their ancient worship will be cast to the moles and to the bats. While he muses the fire in India burns. We may be sure that he finds it no light burden that he has to bear upon shoulders not 'Atlantean', and that as he looks this way and that, choosing the road to take, he has many sombre visions. He has seemed to himself to hear 'through the dark distances the roar and scream of confusion and carnage'. We may have no such sinister forebodings even if the strong, controlling hand of Britain were withdrawn. But we know that the welding of the peoples has scarcely been begun, and that India a nation is still a far distant goal. If it is ever to be reached it must be in a large measure by their own efforts and not by those of any stranger. It should be Britain's aim to give them every opportunity to exercise their growing capacity, not grudgingly nor of necessity, but thrusting the responsibility eagerly upon them. We may then catch glimpses of the future of a people, not any longer drawn aside by the bitterness and the clamour of political warfare from their own peculiar calling, but attaining to be in a higher degree than ever in the past the *guru* nation. And we can hear them repeat the words of their old prophet, Nanak, 'I am neither Hindu nor Mohammedan', from the experience of a far more deeply unifying faith than the 'Din-i-Ilahi' of Akbar.

# III. THE SITUATION IN 1923[1]

## AN AUDIT OF INDIA'S HOPES AND FEARS

### I

THERE is a pause at present in the clamour of Indian politics, and it is well that it should be used to review and to appraise the situation. What does the pause imply?

> There is a silence that saith, Áh, me;
> There is a silence that nothing saith.

Which is this? Is it the silence of sullenness and anger, soon to break out again in violence, or the silence of listlessness and indifference? These are questions for those to answer upon whom has been laid the burden of the mystery of this Oriental people. To govern it is necessary to understand.

It is, I think, true to say that one effect of government by an elaborate machine is that those in control are apt to consider the highest good of the administration to consist in its smooth running. The manipulation of its wheels and screws becomes the chief end of their statesmanship. But a time arrives, and it has arrived now in India, when a higher type of wisdom is demanded of the rulers. Statesmen, not officials,—men who can see into the causes of the nation's ills, who can feel and gauge the gusts of passion and desire that are stirring in the hearts of the people round about them, and who have the courage to act accordingly, however precedent may fail

[1] Published in June 1923.

them—leaders of that kind are demanded by India's present condition, and the lack of such leaders makes the future uncertain and menacing.

It has always been a proverb that India is a land hard for the foreigner to understand, and a land about which it is dangerous for any one to generalize. As a matter of fact, this mystery has been due to little else than the vastness and the silence of the Indian continent. But it is no longer to-day so vast or so silent. The shrinkage of a world that now, we are told, is to the wireless telegraphist only one tenth of a second in circumference, has affected India also. Lord Curzon, when he was Viceroy, described, in one of his sonorous phrases, some world-event of the time as 'reverberating through the whispering-galleries of the East'. There have been reverberations many and terrible since then, which have brought men together in fear, in hope, in jealousy of the stranger, in an awakening to national kinship.

These agitations have stirred the life of India no less than they have that of other lands. The dumb has found a voice. Some one recently in the House of Commons charged Mr. Montagu with having disturbed 'the pathetic contentment' of the Indian people. The pathos consists, one must suppose, in the fact that, once the sleeper wakes, no potions can charm him back to slumber. From the point of view of many in the West the tragedy of the situation lies in the quickening of desire in these patient and submissive hearts. Where a temper of dispassion, of listlessness, had brooded for so long over a docile population, and 'love for the Ultimate and Universal' had happily absorbed their attention, the tides of worldly longing have now begun to surge and heave. It is a change that is disquieting to those who

had profited by that 'pathetic contentment', and it demands diagnosis.

The first fact that we have to face and understand is—Mahatma Gandhi. I do not propose to add another to the many attempts that have been made to pluck out the heart of this mystery; but no explanation of contemporary India can leave him out of account. When 'Lokamanya' Tilak died, some one described him as a 'portent'. He was that just because he was Lokamanya, that is, a demagogue, the voice of popular passion, crude, violent, dangerous. Gandhi is 'Mahatma', and by that title he is linked, not with the gross, sensual, common man, but with India's ideal, India's dreams. In a Marathi poem, written seven centuries ago, the god Krishna is represented as describing the Mahatmas, 'the great-hearted', 'who day and night are from all passion free'.

> With pearls of peace their limbs they beautify;
> Within their minds as in a scabbard I,
> The All-Indweller, lie.
>
> Therefore their love waxes unceasingly—
> These great-souled ones; not the least rift can be
> Between their hearts and me.

One of whom such thoughts as these can be thought is not a portent; he is a symbol. In him we see the spirit of India reawakening, calling up ideals, long forgotten, from their graves. Such is this frail man's power. He is India risen from the dead, and his voice stirs in hearts all through the land emotions that are ancient and profound.

A shrewd observer has remarked that the influence that Mr. Gandhi exercises is not such as accompanies a political movement but such as accompanies a religious revival. The religion of that realist, that practitioner of

*realpolitik*, B. G. Tilak, was a tool in the politician's hand. 'He used to challenge my interpretation of life,' Mr. Gandhi tells us, 'and frankly and bluntly would say truth and untruth were only relative terms, but at the bottom there was no such thing as truth and untruth, just as there was no such thing as life and death.'

That is the voice of the Indian casuist, and Indian philosophy lends itself to such subtle and poisonous doctrine. Gandhi's message pierces beneath the message of the Vedanta to a deeper and not less ancient fountain of Indian wisdom. He claims to follow in the footsteps of Buddha and Christ, and in doing so he places himself in the succession of the Hindu *bhaktas*, those who, in however varying measure, recognize and reverence a moral order. He believes in God and duty, even as Mazzini did, and his central message affirms 'the sovereign virtue of sacrifice without retaliation'. Sometimes, with the fanaticism of a medieval Christian monk or a modern evangelist, he preaches the supreme efficacy of 'blood'. It is a word that seldom fails to touch deep and passionate chords in the human soul. One heart ablaze sets another on fire. 'I know that people have sometimes gone mad,' he said to the judge who tried him at Ahmedabad. And he went on: 'You will have a glimpse of what is raging within my breast to run the maddest risk which a man can run.'

He knew that he was playing with fire; he took the risk. His business was to set India ablaze. That is why he is in jail to-day.[1] The British judge who sentenced him to six years' imprisonment said to him in doing so:

'Having regard to the nature of your political teachings and the nature of many of those to whom they were

[1] He was released in February 1924.

addressed, how you can have continued to believe that violence would not be an inevitable consequence, it passes my capacity to understand. There are few people in India who do not sincerely regret that you should have made it impossible for any Government to leave you at liberty. But it is so.'

The prisoner in the dock urged no plea in extenuation of his crime. He was wholly submissive and wholly unrepentant. 'I am here', he said, 'to invite and submit cheerfully to the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me for what in law is a deliberate crime, and what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen.'

These exchanges are at least unusual between the magistrate's bench and the prisoner's dock. A parallel has been freely drawn between that scene and the scene before the judgement-seat of Pilate, between 'the weaver of Sabarmati' and the Carpenter of Nazareth. There is, perhaps, this at least of similarity, that both prisoners were looking beyond the immediate present to remoter consequences. Their eyes 'dream against a distant goal'. Mr. Gandhi was deliberately and gladly laying himself upon the altar, in order that his people might be born again to what he believed would be a higher level of living. He would light a fire in India that should never be put out.

The actions of Mr. Gandhi were not, then, those of an aimless fanatic. They were all directed consistently to a single end—the creation of a new spirit of strength and self-respect in India. In one of his most outspoken articles in his paper, *Young India*, an article with the curious title 'Shaking the Manes', he challenges, in behalf of India, the utmost that the 'hard fibre' of Britain can do to crush the awakening Indian spirit. The fight, he

says, is to be a fight to a finish, but 'I hope and pray', he goes on, 'that God will give India sufficient humility and sufficient strength to remain non-violent to the end.' Every item in his programme has its place there as a means of making the people inwardly strong and self-respecting, and is meant to create 'a spirit that will neither bend nor break'. He holds that the domination in India of 'the most determined people in the world' has had the effect of crushing the spirit of those under their control; and by being continually told that they are not fit to govern themselves they are being made unfit. He would awaken in them the conviction that they can achieve their own destiny, and that they can do so 'without any further tutelage and without arms'.

Some who distrust the bona fides of this leader allege that he advocates non-violence only because in the circumstances a programme of violence is doomed to failure; that he teaches this method as a policy, not as a *dharma* or matter of principle. That view is in direct contradiction to Mr. Gandhi's whole message and to his repeated declarations. No one can doubt that he is sincere in his belief that the strength he labours to create in India, that by means of which he believes that she shall achieve her destiny, is an inward strength based upon purity and love.

These are lofty aspirations, and, unless we are prepared to call their promulgator in plain terms a hypocrite, we must grant him a place of his own among the revolutionaries. It is not strange that he has been compared with Christ, when we find him echoing, in an environment so inhospitable to such a message, some of the central thoughts of Christ. That he has caught the attention of so great a multitude, that, still more, he has won the

hearts of so many among them, is an amazing fact, and, one is inclined to affirm, is something possible only in India. It is a poor business, and an unworthy, to belittle his achievement. Whatever deductions may have to be made as a result of more careful scrutiny, that achievement remains astounding. But now that an interval has been given for reflection, we are bound to ask how far Mahatma Gandhi has actually achieved an aim so high. Has he created a new spirit in India deep enough and sufficiently widespread among the people to make it possible to claim for him that he has opened the way to freedom?

He himself believed that the period that has now come would be the time when his work would be tested. It is not possible indeed to claim for Mr. Gandhi that he has been consistent in his utterances; and his broken promises of *swaraj*, as they appeared to many of his followers, undoubtedly helped to create, as time passed, a temper of disillusionment. This disillusionment was due, no doubt, to a failure to realize that every promise was conditional. The majority gave heed to the fair hopes he held up before them, but lent a deaf ear to the harsh warnings that accompanied them. The time of purgation had to come, and it has come.

In his worthiest hours Mr. Gandhi distrusted his own popularity. He desired to conquer, not by force of the numbers of his nominal following, but by power of conviction of those who understood. 'I have become literally sick', he said a few weeks before his arrest, 'of the adoration of the unthinking multitude. I would feel certain of my ground if I was spat upon by them. . . . I see that our non-violence is skin-deep.' He even suggested that his imprisonment might be a benefit to

the people. It would show, he said, that he had not the supernatural powers that the superstitious credited him with; it would try the reality of the people's faith in his programme and, at the same time, their ability to carry on their activities without his leadership; and, finally, it would give him 'a quiet and physical rest, which', he added, and no one can dispute it, 'perhaps I deserve'.

II

It is extraordinarily difficult, in a land so vast and varied as is India, to pronounce any confident judgement as to the prevailing mood of the people. In the Marathi region, for example, Mr. Gandhi's influence has never been widespread or deep. They distinguish there, as those who are perhaps the most 'realist' race in India, between the saint in him and the politician. The former they reverence; the latter they have followed reluctantly, and with no faith in his programme. Now that his personal influence is withdrawn, they are making use of the opportunity to reinstate the policy of their own admired leader, Mr. Tilak.

Almost all the leaders who have arisen in the Marathi country have come from among the Chitpawan Brāhmans, whose 'hardheadedness' and practical statesmanship have perhaps helped to encourage the fantastic theory that, grey-eyed as some of them are, they may trace their pedigree to Scandinavian ancestors and have their Oriental mysticism crossed with the colder calculation of the North. Certainly their idealism is in little danger of 'leaving the earth to lose itself in the sky', as Mr. Gandhi's may be said to do. Was not the programme for many a decade, even of their social reformers, the unheroic one of 'progress along the line of

least resistance'? They are accordingly taking the opportunity that is now granted them to disengage the political Gandhi from the saintly Gandhi, and to bring the Congress policy down to earth again.

There is certainly, not only in the Marathi country, but throughout the whole of India, a power working all the time against the 'Non-Co-operation' policy, with its demand for sacrifice—the power of self-interest. The Mahatma makes great demands. Tilak, the worldly-wise, harnessed religion and politics side by side to the chariot of *swaraj*. But one who denounces untouchability and speaks so frequently of Christ—how can he, however much he protests himself a Hindu, escape the suspicion of the orthodox? He claims indeed to have 'experimented' by 'introducing religion into politics'; and in making that claim, he pronounces judgement on the religion, with the elephant-headed Ganpati as its symbol, which Tilak at an earlier period summoned to his aid. Tilak's experiment had introduced the outward emblems of Hinduism and the forces of orthodoxy and reaction into politics, but not the reality of religion. Mr. Gandhi sought to do so.

But here we touch, I think, the fatal defect of Mr. Gandhi's entire political structure—'the one weak place that 's stanchioned with a lie'. The lie is not, indeed, the gross one that Mr. Tilak used. Mr. Gandhi is incapable of deliberate deceit; but he has been, one cannot but feel, self-deceived. He has adjusted his lofty teaching to mean political uses. He who should have been free to follow his own ideal, unimpeded, had, as Swami Vivekananda said of himself long ago, 'become entangled'. He goes far to acknowledge this himself. 'If I seem to take part in politics', he says, 'it is only

because politics encircle us to-day like the coil of a snake from which one cannot get out, no matter how much one tries.' It seems as if, as time goes on, the snake is wrapping its coils ever closer around him. Perhaps at the last the prison-cell presented itself to him in the aspect of a way of escape from an intolerable contradiction.

But if he was glad to escape from the temptations of expediency to the shelter of a jail, there are many who were still more glad to yield to these temptations. And now that he is no longer there, the saint, to rebuke them, they can yield the more easily and comfortably. Undoubtedly it is true of a large section of the population that the Mahatma's level was too lofty for them. They had grown somewhat weary, and were glad to relax. The pull of the worldly spirit was against his success. He wound them up too high; and they are now well content to get back to earth and to get on once more with their money-making.

The financial *débâcle* is another element in the situation which has told powerfully against him. Many financial magnates are among the Mahatma's most devoted followers. It was easy to follow him and to be generous in support of his schemes in the years of the war and after, when their wealth seemed to have no limits. But now the lean years have come and enthusiasm has chilled. Counsels of prudence are more likely to be heeded, and there is a certain soreness in the remembrance of great sums, now irrecoverable, given away at the gust of impulse and by the persuasions of this unpractical saint.

It is surely a tragedy when a government has to place its hopes upon the triumph of the grosser elements in the souls of the people whom it governs, when it has to

desire eagerly that worldliness shall return and engulf them as in the past. If only Brahmā will sink back again into his heavy slumber, the *pralaya*, the period of catastrophe, which threatens us will pass, and those in authority will be able to set the machinery of administration going again and 'pathetic content' will reign as heretofore. 'I fear', Mr. Gandhi says in one of his many writings, 'we will have to admit that moneyed men support British rule; their interest is bound up with its stability.'

It is true, of course, that law and order are necessary for the pursuit of a man's honest avocations and for the maintenance of what is called civilization. It is true, too, that idealism may be a dangerous dynamite in the hands of folly or of ignorance, or even of *sancta simplicitas*. At the same time, there is, surely, something wrong with a state when the only place for the idealist whom all, even the judge who condemns him, respect, is the prison-cell, and when the strength of the state lies, not in its people's fear of God, but in their desire for gain. There is some justification in these circumstances for Mr. Gandhi's view that civilization is a disease with which England is 'afflicted'. It is irreligion, and 'makes bodily welfare the object of life'. It is, alas, a disease that afflicts India too, whether it is to be pronounced indigenous or an importation from the West. Undoubtedly the downward pull of this 'civilization', the desire to cease troubling for a while about *swaraj* and self-purification, and to resume the making of money, has been a more effective ally of the bureaucracy than all their skill and statesmanship.

These things have caused what is at least a temporary weakening of Mr. Gandhi's amazing power. What is

generally considered common sense will keep breaking in, and now its voice begins to be heeded. This is a quality that the Moderates possess in abundance. They are believers, like the rest of us, in civilization. They are not carried off their feet and they do not carry others off their feet. They are able to do little, for they do not awaken passion; they do not touch the heart. Moderation makes a poor 'slogan' with the multitude. Its advocates bring no torch such as Mr. Gandhi carries, with which to kindle a prairie fire. He calls his method that of *ahimsa*, non-violence, even love; but it can hardly be questioned that, when it passes from his lips to his hearers' hearts, it is a flame still, but a flame now of hate. Hence the massacres of Malabar and Bombay and Chauri-Chaura. Is it simplicity or is it vanity that persuades him that, by waving his wand, he can tame this tiger? From 'mobocracy' he will evolve democracy by 'a process of national purification, training, and sacrifice'. Surely no leader such as this has ever before perplexed the minds of those who would understand him and estimate his influence; no leader who combined so much nobility and so much folly, such qualities fitted at once to exalt a people and to endanger the safety of the state.

It is a difficult, if not an impossible, task that Mr. Gandhi has set himself. He would be at once a stimulus and a restraint. He would awaken in his fellow countrymen simultaneously passion and self-control. In the former task he has had a success that is amazing; in the latter he has failed, and he is, I think, conscious that he has failed. It is a question now whether his half success will not prove presently an entire failure, and whether those so suddenly awakened are not even now

sinking back again to slumber. He has created what is little better than a frenzy, as he calls it himself, which may burn itself out in a brief and destructive conflagration, and then be succeeded by a deeper desolation than before. He was dismayed himself once, when he stood in the streets of Bombay, by the battered victims of a ferocity he had done much to unleash. That again was followed by other warnings, even more hideous, that made him pause. 'What if', he cries, 'when the fury bursts, not a man, woman, or child is safe and every man's hand is raised against his fellow being? Of what avail is it then if I fast myself to death in the event of such a catastrophe coming to pass?'

He had good reason for such misgivings. India has no lack of inflammable material in its wide, sun-scorched plains. Perhaps, after all, the cold prudence of the Government is a wiser guide on the road to *swaraj*. But who will believe it? There is no more sinister aspect of the situation than the deep, invincible distrust of the good faith of Great Britain and her representatives in India that possesses the leaders of the people. Moderate and extremist alike believe—and much in recent financial transactions gives them valid excuse for their belief—that shopkeeper England is out for loot in her relation to India. This widespread conviction has wrought disastrously upon the attitude of the thoughtful and articulate classes toward the foreign ruler. So long as this is so, what place can there be for that gratitude which some demand?

The 'white man's burden' is the occasion only of a sneer. Whether with good cause or without, it yet is true to-day that India, who once in a measure reverenced England as her *guru*, her spiritual preceptor, now no

longer does so. No one can ever deny that Great Britain has brought to India very great gifts. It is she that has shown to her the face of Liberty, and 'terrible are the loves she has inspired'. And yet we now see India, as represented by some of her noblest sons, averting her face from this foster-mother, at whose knee she has learned such lessons. We see her turning away, critical and suspicious, 'ashes to the very soul'. Distrust, deepening into 'non-violent' hate on the one hand, and on the other a new ambition to live her own life, a new faith in herself, and an intoxicating dream of power—these make together a mood that is full of peril to the public peace.

## III

These are some of the elements that blend to form the complex and baffling situation in which we find the Indian peoples at the present time. The ingredients are mingled in varying proportions in one section of the community and in another, in one province in the North and another in the South. Dominant over the whole has been the personality of Mahatma Gandhi, broadcasting, like a central wireless telephone station, a message of extraordinary stimulus and quickening. Hope and agitation and disappointment have swept across the land in wave after wave. Wherever any spark of anger or discontent has been kindled, this wind that is abroad fans it to a dangerous flame. The brutal passion of a planter; the long-established custom of impressing labour for Government purposes on the frontier; the privilege of the 'poor white' to have a third-class compartment reserved for him in the train—such matters as these are no longer ordinary matters of injustice or of crime; they become

occasions for the clash of interracial warfare; they feed the fires of interracial hate.

It may be that the hopes that Mr. Gandhi kindled are fading, that the flames are dying down, and that the Imperial Fire Brigade has now got the situation 'well in hand'. But beneath the ashes of the dying conflagration there smoulder Tartarean fires, and no one can tell when they may break forth again. Certainly we may well fear that there will be further outbreaks of violence, blood-stained and full of peril to the state.

There have been warnings enough already that such events hover near and threatening. We have had some grim samples. There were, first, the horrors of Malabar in the South; then the horrors of Chauri-Chaura in the North. In both cases it is obvious that what might have been an insignificant outbreak of disorder was transformed by the atmosphere of the time into a hideous orgy of blood and violence. It is true that in both cases there was serious cause for discontent. India's agrarian troubles are not new, and they will not soon or easily come to an end. But the oppression of the landlord becomes to his oppressed and ignorant tenant only one item more in the crime-sheet of the ruler—one item more, which suddenly arouses him from sullenness to fierce and brutal acts.

Another centre that is being watched with considerable anxiety is the Punjab. Names from that province have come to be the rallying cries of hate. Amritsar and Jallianwalla Bagh are being used with the same skill and for the same purpose with which Antony held up Caesar's blood-stained mantle. 'O piteous spectacle! O most bloody sight! Revenge! Burn! Fire! Kill! Slay!' The reaction to such a stimulus is inevitable. And when it is in the land of the Sikhs that the stimulus is applied, the

reaction is likely to be as violent as ever it was in the streets of Rome.

No wonder then that the movements of the Akalis are causing anxiety to the authorities. This is a fanatical sect of Sikhs, who are to their religion very much the same as the Ghazi is to that of the Mohammedans. They claim as a right of their sect to carry arms; and when zeal for their religion reinforces zeal for their country's honour and the reawakening of old ambitions for dominance, there is danger enough that they will not only carry arms, but use them. How near sheer barbarism lies to the surface among these people was shown when a conflict of extraordinary ferocity took place within the courts of one of their temples between a company of Akalis and the armed retainers of the high priest of the temple. The story reveals at the same time how cunningly the horrors of even this crime can be used to feed the fires of patriotic hate. For the lie was soon passing from bazaar to bazaar, that the massacre was wrought with the approval, or at least the tacit connivance of the British administrators.

There are other lesser symptoms of unrest that one can note in every province. To-day it affects the coolie workers in Assam; to-morrow the employees of the East Indian Railway. It breaks out among the hillmen of the frontier; among the Bhils of a Rajputana state; among mill-workers in Madras. Industrial discontent, agrarian discontent, discontent with long-tolerated caste-exclusiveness and pride—every wrong however ancient, now looms through the mist of ill-will with an aspect to exasperate and embitter that it never bore before. The non-Brāhman refuses to co-operate with the Brāhman, and leaves the Brāhman's fields untilled, his clothes unwashed,

and his beard unshaved. The Brāhman, himself a non-co-operator with the Government, is hoist with his own petard, and quite unable to see the humour of the situation. Hate is a dangerous devil to unchain. No one can be sure that he will not turn round, like Porus's infuriated elephants, upon the ranks of those who let him loose against their enemies. Perhaps this reflection also is occupying some minds during these days of truce.

But the root cause of India's unhappiness, but for which the great multitude of her people would pay little heed to the incitements of the agitator, is her poverty. There is a ribald saying of the Anglo-Indians of an older generation that an Indian can live on the smell of an oil rag. He cannot, but sometimes he is almost compelled to try. It seems as if the land were becoming poorer and poorer, and the desert were encroaching slowly but steadily upon the sown. It is said that once upon a time Sind was a fruitful land. Wide tracts of the Deccan seem to be on the way to becoming what Sind to-day is. It is true that wide tracts of the desert have been won back to fertility by great systems of irrigation. But the area within which harvests are becoming more and more precarious is, it seems, extending steadily and continuously. That at least appears to be the experience within the last few years. The increase of prices may sometimes mean that the rich are becoming richer; it always means that the poor are becoming poorer.

By irrigation, by improved agricultural methods, this evil may be, and is being, palliated. But it remains a very formidable evil still. When the rains fail and the fields lie brown and empty, there is only one thing to do. Men and women and children—their cattle sold or dead—must strike the weary trail for work. And so the city

D

sucks them into its black depths. The last census of Bombay reveals the fact that only nineteen per cent. of its million inhabitants are natives of the city. The great bulk of them have been blown there like dust or withered leaves by the hot winds that sweep across the plains.

'One notable feature of our industrial organization [to quote Mr. A. C. Chatterjee, Secretary to the Government of India, Department of Industries] is that the workers are practically all recruited from the ranks of agriculture. They travel long distances, in many cases hundreds of miles, to tracts where a different language, a different climate, and an entirely different environment confront them, in addition to the strangeness of unfamiliar, continuous, and sometimes dangerous work in closed buildings and areas.'

These are circumstances which are not satisfactory from the point of view either of the master or of the worker. They create inefficiency and they create discontent; but, most of all, they create misery and disease and vice. The tale of industrialism, written in the West in smoke and squalor, is being repeated to-day in India, and the same pall that blackens our own land is being cast across the brilliance of her sunshine.

Already we can see, even in the jungles of the land, 'the spreading of the hideous town'. A black, steel-smelting city called Jamshedpur has arisen in the midst of the wide solitudes of Behar. In these iron factories and in the mills of Bombay and Calcutta and Madras work simple, ignorant peasant men and women, to whom the furnaces and the machines are strange demons to be appeased. They are as little adapted to live in their new surroundings as are their cows and their buffaloes. Their children die; they become entangled in the net of the city's iniquities; they are fortunate, indeed, if they can

presently escape back to the lesser tragedy of a life—even if it be on only one meal a day—lived in the clean air of their native village. The love of their own 'country', the region in which they were born and their fathers were born before them, is often inarticulate, but it is always deep in the peasantry of India.

No one needs to remind us that the devil does not have his lair only in the city's streets. Mr. Gandhi seems to believe that there is something diabolic in machinery. 'It is machinery', he says, 'that has impoverished India.' That is, of course, pure fantasy and prejudice. He declares again, 'Impoverished India can become free, but it will be hard for any India made rich through immorality to regain its freedom.' There is at the same time an element of sorrowful truth in his denunciations. Mill-woven cotton is in danger, as he declares, of getting into the lungs of India, as of other lands as well. It is not the machine, but the materialism of which the machine is apt to be the symbol, that is the danger. The *charka*—the spinning-wheel—that Mr. Gandhi has emblazoned on his flag may signify, just as much as any power-loom, a spirit that is materialized and worldly. What Mr. Gandhi really desires to teach is, as the Greek poet sings, that 'the soul's wealth is the only wealth'. The Gujerati for civilization, he tells us, is 'good conduct', and all men of goodwill must wish him well if he desires to translate into that language the materialism and the greed of so much that calls itself civilization.

It is really the enslavement of the soul that this man, when he understands himself aright and is truest to his central aim, desires to overthrow. That is the *swaraj* that he has set before himself, though he has often lost sight of the goal, and missed the straight path to it. Neither

machinery, nor an English education, nor the 'Satanic British Government, is the real enemy that hinders him and that hinders India from attaining this desire. It surely is disastrous folly to speak, as he has spoken, of 'the hallucination of Schools and Colleges'; to declare, as he has declared, that 'Tilak and Rām Mohan Roy would have been far greater men if they had not the contagion of English learning'. The hindrances in the way of the attainment of that high are *swaraj* indeed many and formidable. Poverty is one, as we have seen; ignorance is another; ancient and deep-ingrained prejudice, dividing class from class as by impassable gulfs of contempt, is a third. The co-operation of every man of goodwill, of whatever race or creed, is needed if these tremendous barriers to freedom are to be overthrown. No one could have more fitly or effectively exercised to this end a ministry of reconciliation than Mahatma Gandhi. He lies in prison,[1] as do many others who might have been his fellow workers in a task so noble. Non-Co-operation has failed, and repression has failed and will fail. Force is no remedy. It is time, for India's sake, that we all return to sanity and co-operate with one accord for the nation's highest good.

[1] See note on p. 20.

# PART II

# SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS UNREST

## IV. THE CONFLICT OF RELIGIONS[1]

SOME one has said that India is not a single star but a constellation. This is true no less of the beliefs of the people than of their racial characteristics. In regard to Hinduism it is a commonplace that it is not one religion but a cento of religions; that it does not profess and maintain a single creed, but permits its adherents a latitude of belief or unbelief wide enough to bring about, if adopted in the West, not only a reunion of Christendom, but a combination comprehensive enough to include within it some of its bitterest antagonists. A story related by Lord Curzon is an admirable parable of this characteristic of Hinduism,—a characteristic which makes it almost a museum of religious beliefs. He tells how a friend of his examined the arrows in the quiver of a native hunter. 'He found that the first was tipped with stone of the neolithic age, and the next was tipped with electric telegraph wire—a theft from the twentieth century.' Hinduism has its quiver filled with ideas equally remote from each other in time and equally alien in association.

Not only is the religion so vast and so amorphous; a closely related and equally remarkable property, though

[1] Published in October 1907.

one less fully recognized, is its continual subjection to change, its continual self-adaptation to new circumstances and new demands. This is not merely a modern feature due to the urgent pressure of new ideas imported into the land by the civilization of Europe. At whatever period in its history this religion presents itself to our view, it appears in a condition of agitation, new cults and castes and customs constantly springing up within its borders. So long as India and its peoples were looked at only from without, as a province to be governed, as a land to which the adventurer went that he might shake the pagoda-tree, so long only was it possible to speak of the 'unchanging East'. Every religion, to be sure, takes on new aspects and is interpreted in new ways with the growing and developing and changing mind of man. But the body of beliefs and practices, now called Hinduism, exhibits, and appears always to have exhibited, a mutability of quite a different character, possible only because of the peculiarity of its organization. It is not one name and life, as in the case of Buddhism, Christianity, and Mahommedanism, that gives it unity. As the names Brahmanism and Hinduism suggest, it is the people who make the faith, and with the varying needs and moods and aspirations of their minds the worship and the doctrine assume varying forms. We might almost say of it that it is a circle whose centre is everywhere—everywhere, at least, in India—and whose circumference is nowhere. Were it not that there are influences at work upon Hinduism limiting this omnivorous capacity, there seems little reason why it should not take Christianity in some form within its hospitable borders and, as it has included Buddha among its incarnations, include Christ as well.

The influence that is nowadays setting bounds to this absorbent power is due to its contact with faiths more systematic and more highly organized. Sir Alfred Lyall noted twenty-five years ago the probable effect upon the anarchic beliefs of Hinduism of the 'ideas of rule, organized purpose, and moral law' that have come to the country with the British power. One result that does not seem to have occurred to him is becoming apparent to-day. Hinduism is organizing itself and delimiting its borders, and in so doing is losing some of the strength that lay in its adaptability. In consequence it must now defend its position against aggression, and finds it less possible than in the past to conquer its enemies by accepting them as friends.

The two features of Hinduism that have been emphasized as peculiarly characteristic of it, its lack of articulation as a system of belief, and its adaptability to new circumstances, have been possible to it because of another peculiarity which is a main source of its strength and yet is likely to prove a fatal weakness. The danger of anarchy is avoided by reason of the fact that Hinduism is, at the same time, a fully organized and articulated social system. However frequently and completely the spiritual cabinet may change, the permanent department of caste carries on the government and maintains continuity. In this lies its strength to resist assaults upon the reasonableness or the truth of its doctrinal tenets. However it may be stricken and overcome as a system of truth, so long as it retains its authority as a social system it is unconquered and presently its vigour revives. But in this also lies a fundamental weakness, for time will at the last wear out even the most tenacious social system that rests on

privilege and prejudice, and if by that time the spiritual content of Hinduism has not found a fitter tenement, the one may perish with the other. But whether this is an event that will happen soon or late, whether Hinduism is destined long to endure as a religion and a church controlling, however incoherently, the worship and aspirations of its adherents, are questions of secondary consequence. What is most interesting to the student of the religious situation in India is to discern how the elements of truth in this religion, with so long and so fascinating a history, will endure, and to what new shape they will be moulded. In the conflict of faiths that is at present raging in India, it is the spiritual content of Hinduism that alone matters; it is the wine that we must think of, not the bottles. The English legions may, as Sir Alfred Lyall feared, 'tramp across the Asiatic stage and disappear', but it does not follow, as he seems to have concluded, that 'the clouds of confusion and superstition will roll up again'. For Hinduism is something more than confusion and superstition, and every day is showing, what was no doubt much less manifest when Sir Alfred Lyall wrote, that other forces that have entered India are likely to be more permanent than the English legions, and that this religion is striving, with a success that is certain to be increasing and enduring, to slough its superstition and to recover and conserve the spiritual contents of its ancient heritage.

There is much on the surface that is perplexing in the present religious attitude of many Indians. It is nothing new to suggest that a close parallel may be traced between the condition of things among them and the religious situation in the Roman Empire in the second century, as described by Gibbon. Then, as now, the

great body of the people followed superstitious practices with a freedom 'not confined by the chains of any speculative system'; there was 'the devout polytheist' whom 'fear, gratitude, and curiosity, a dream or an omen, a singular disorder or a distant journey, perpetually disposed to multiply the articles of his belief and to enlarge the list of his protectors'; there were then, as there certainly are in India to-day, the 'ingenious youth, alike instructed in every school to reject and despise the religion of the multitude', as well as the philosophers who, 'viewing with a smile of pity or indulgence the various errors of the vulgar, diligently practise the ceremonies of their fathers and devoutly frequent the temples of their gods'. No description could be more accurate of many sections of the population in India, and no description could be more inadequate if accepted as complete. Contempt has never eyes to see beneath the surface, and such a description fails altogether to take account of the real inner striving of the people's spirit which there is in India, as we may be sure there was likewise within the Roman Empire. We cannot believe that a stream that has flowed down the centuries, so strong and full, will end at last as a stagnant waste of waters. Nor are there signs of such an issue. There is hesitancy as to what future course the stream will take. There are divided counsels, and there is the clamour of many counsellors. But still, as of old in India, the claims of the spirit are reckoned paramount, and India's spiritual inheritance her most precious possession.

No thoughtful observer, whether Indian or European, will deny that the main factor in producing the movement of thought and the recombination of beliefs in the country is Christianity. Many influences, indeed, are

pressing in upon its ancient civilization, some of them material and gross and degrading. But along with and behind even the unworthiest of these there is something of the Christian atmosphere, some hint of the Christian attitude. It is an attitude very different from that which views the universe as a dream and desires only the 'great release'. The Vedantist can strive no less truly than the Christian, but it is a strife that he may cease from strife. The two points of view could not be more antipodal, nor could he who adheres to the Hindu ideal be more completely a stranger and an alien within the Christian civilization. But whichever of the two we may consider to be higher, there is no question that the Christian civilization is more widely prevailing. That it should have an influence upon its adversary is inevitable: its conceptions of religion as bearing fruit in conduct, and of the ideal character, which religion aims at producing, as directed towards the service of others, are foreign to the old Indian faiths. Accordingly, what we see happening in India is not merely the remoulding of religious ideals in view of a higher standard of morality; it is, on the one hand, the conjunction for the first time of morality and religion—the transformation of religion into a sanction for conduct—and, on the other, the interpretation of conduct as loving service.

A most interesting example of this new attitude is afforded by the movement begun by Swami Vivekananda, which has made its influence felt in America as well as in India, and which calls itself, significantly enough, 'Practical Vedanta'. The words seem almost a contradiction in terms. The founder of this new school, Ramkrishna Paramhamsa, though himself a recluse of the old Indian type, seems to have foreseen the task that

lay before his successors—a task which Vivekananda, by his eloquence and his magnetic personality, carried as near to accomplishment as perhaps is possible. That task was really the reconciliation of incompatible ideals, and Swami Vivekananda seems, by the report of those who knew him, to have been profoundly aware at times of their incompatibility. One who founded orphanages and industrial schools, who taught his disciples to relieve the famine-stricken and to nurse the sick, who is reported even to have claimed that if he had only 'twenty million pounds' he could 'set India on her feet'—such a one had certainly come under many of the ideals—and not all of them the highest—of that Western world which he sought to conquer for Vedantism. His eloquence and activity seem far enough from attaining the ancient goal that Bhava summed up to Vashkali in the words: 'This Atman is silence.' No wonder he said once, as his European disciple, Sister Nivedita, reports: 'I have become entangled.'

Not only does this modern Vedanta feel the need, under the influence of a new moral standard, of infusing the old ideal of release with the alien conceptions of service and of energy. The Indian who has breathed the spirit of the West feels likewise that his beliefs must aim at being reasonable and consistent. Swami Vivekananda would not have been, as he was, a typical product of his time, had he not been a patriot, passionately proud of his country's ancient past and possessed by ambition for her future greatness. 'The queen of his adoration', says Sister Nivedita, 'was his motherland.' This spirit made him labour to demonstrate the unity and rationality of her various systems of religious and philosophical speculation in order that all schools might unite in the service

of her future. But here he separated himself from the closely allied propaganda associated with the Theosophical Society, and especially with Mrs. Besant, which is exercising a still more powerful influence in the recombination and remoulding of Indian ideas. Swami Vivekananda pours the vials of his invective upon the popular religion. 'Our god', he says, 'is the cooking-pot, and our religion is "Don't touch me, I am holy".' For him there is nothing worthy in Indian thought that does not derive from the Vedas; his 'universal religion' is the philosophy of the Upanishads. Mrs. Besant, foreigner though she is, is much less of an iconoclast and far more tender to popular superstitions. The Puranas, rightly understood, have still their message which is precious. In this respect one cannot but be struck by the close parallel between the work of this modern interpreter of Hinduism and that of the neo-Platonists in the third and fourth centuries. Both are alike in their high moral tone and in seeking to purify and elevate the popular religion. But both are alike, we must also affirm, in 'lending the forces of philosophy to deepen the superstition of the age'.[1] Just as in the one case Saturn devouring his children was explained as intelligence returning upon itself, so in the other the churning of the sea of milk by the serpent Vasuki is an anticipation of Sir William Crookes' theory of the genesis of the elements, and the *lingam* of Śiva is glorified into 'a pillar of fire, typifying creative energy'. Just as Porphyry defended idolatry so also does Mrs. Besant, but on the more modern ground that the image 'forms a magnetic communication between the divine form and the worshipper'.

Certainly Mrs. Besant is exercising a remarkable

[1] Dill's *Roman Society in the Last Century of the Western Empire*, p. 106.

influence throughout India, and an influence which, in spite of its adherence to much that is superstitious, is helping ultimately towards the purifying of Hinduism. To interpret a popular superstition as a symbol may preserve it, but only for a while. It is not symbols but concrete and gross facts that the great body of the people worship. Mrs. Besant is helping indeed to revive Hinduism, but it is mainly by directing attention towards its spiritual content and by moralizing and organizing it. Her superstitions, if we may call them so, have been kept for the most part hitherto in the background. Swami Vivekananda would have none of them. 'These creepy things,' he said, 'these mysticisms . . . are generally weakening.' He aimed at establishing what he believed would be a purely rational religion. Mrs. Besant is in fuller agreement with him in her vigorous attempts to systematize Hinduism and reconcile its opposing schools of thought. Under her impulse and direction handbooks of Hinduism have been prepared and published, to serve as text-books in elementary schools, in High Schools and in Colleges. One can trace throughout them the valiant efforts of this school to reconcile conflicting views, to rationalize by the aid of modern science and supposed psychic phenomena such practices as ancestor worship and the use of spells, and to moralize the ingenuous religion of nature. In the earnest propaganda that centres round these two remarkable personalities, one Indian, the other English, the unbiased student cannot fail to see that, hostile as both movements are to Christianity, they are largely debtors to its influence and products of the moral ferment it creates.

These modern movements have somewhat over-

shadowed the older Theistic Samājes or Churches which have a most honourable record in India for consistent rejection of superstitious practices, and which are associated with some of the most distinguished names in modern India. The question is often asked why those societies have not proved more successful. While they undoubtedly still include among them some of the most single-minded and earnest of educated Indians, it cannot be denied that their progress in numbers has been disappointing and that the early enthusiasm has in great measure grown cold. The reasons that are commonly adduced in explanation of this fact by critics of the Samāj movement emphasize the contrast between the position its adherents occupy and that maintained by Mrs. Besant and her followers. These have been clearly stated by a thoughtful writer in a recent number of the *Hindustan Review*. They are, he says, in the first place, that 'its religious creed is too abstract and impersonal, and, if I may say so, too *rational* to appeal to the popular mind. It is, in fact, too philosophical and metaphysical to satisfy the religious cravings of the average man. And the metaphysics, again, is of too Christian a character to suit Hindu taste. Secondly, its method is that of rebellion; it tries to reform the Hindu Society by cutting itself off from it.' While there is, no doubt, considerable truth in this estimate of the causes of the slow progress of the Samāj, it has to be remembered on the one hand that Keshub Chunder Sen has often been charged with excessive emotionalism in the worship he encouraged, while, on the other hand, certain sections of the Samāj have always clung closely to the national religious inheritance and sought inspiration mainly from the poets and teachers of their own

land. Perhaps a large part of the explanation that is sought may be found in the fact that much of the truth those Theistic societies maintain has been of recent years so largely adopted into Hinduism that it seems to many that they can accept it without forsaking the faith of their fathers. The position occupied by the Brahmo Samāj no longer appears as exalted as it seemed at first because considerable tracts of the popular religion have been levelled up towards it. Few, however, as these Indian Theists may be, there is no question that the consistency of their faith and practice and their testimony in behalf of high religious ideals are exercising an important influence in the remaking of India. The name of Rām Mohun Roy especially will ever remain memorable as that of the man who first among his countrymen led the way towards 'the dangers and the glories of blue water'.

It is not to be expected that amid so much spiritual striving there should not appear apostles of reaction. There is certainly a real revival of religious faith, accompanying religious inquiry, in India as in other parts of the world, but there as elsewhere there seems to follow hard after it a revival of superstition. Patriotism in many cases has united itself to the ancient practices, and idolatrous festivals have been invested with a new political significance. A powerful popular leader sees fit, while denouncing the partition of Bengal, to affirm: 'We are all Hindus and idolators, and I am not ashamed of the fact.' But there is a manifest insincerity in such movements which rules them out of our consideration. At the same time, however, one may always expect to find a sincere patriotism which clings to the old ways and the old gods. With such a feeling

Mrs. Besant has considerable sympathy, and claims with reason to have helped greatly in the revival of Sanskrit studies. But often patriotism clings to customs and beliefs that even she cannot accept. It is natural for any people to be excessively proud of their own national achievement, and especially so in the case of a people in the position of the Hindus—at once of great intellectual ability and at the same time restrained from enjoying the full fruition of their own gifts by the pressure upon them of an alien civilization, claiming to be higher. Their patriotism, unable to boast itself in the achievements of to-day, clings with all the more tenacity to the achievements of yesterday. The sanctity of their sacred books is multiplied many fold to their jealous eyes. The holy land of their fathers seems the more hallowed in contrast with its profaned and dejected condition now. It is not to be wondered at that one who comes, like Mrs. Besant, speaking smooth words and sparing their *amour propre* is welcomed by many. This is no doubt one reason why Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samāj, had so great a success, and why the society that he founded still exercises so great an influence in Upper India. He called his countrymen back to what he claimed was the pure religion of the Vedas, purged of the abuses of popular Hinduism, which he declared to be modern innovations. His learning was not profound and his critical methods were not scientific; but he comforted many by convincing them that their ancient religion was not as corrupt and as degraded as they had feared, and addressed his appeal to their national sentiments of patriotism and of pride. The same feelings were gratified when he went on to maintain that every modern

scientific discovery of the West was anticipated in their own ancient scriptures. Those meretricious elements in his teaching would not by themselves, however, have brought to his Samāj the real and enduring success that it is obtaining. That, we must believe, is due mainly to the fact that though Swami Dayanand had no Western education, he himself preached, and he bequeathed to his followers, an earnest spirit of self-sacrifice and a high ideal of duty. In the case of the Arya Samāj, the appeal to patriotism that it is able to make has no doubt guarded it from some of the suspicion that attaches to the Brahmo Samāj ; but in this case, as in all the others we have been considering, it is the purified moral and religious content that is the real spirit of life. More and more it is being recognized by those in India who are not blinded by political prejudice that, in the words of an eminent leader of reform, 'what is not true is not patriotic'.

In all this the working, consciously or unconsciously, of Christian ideals is unmistakable. A Bengali writer, combating in the *Hindustan Review* a few years ago the view that Christianity will become the religion of India, yet concludes with the emphatic statement that its work there has not been a failure. 'It has given us Christ', he says, 'and taught us noble, moral, and spiritual lessons which we have discovered anew in our own scriptures, and thereby satisfied our self-love and made them our very own. It has awakened a new spirit of inquiry in the drooping Hindu mind. It has made Hinduism conscious of its greatness. It has held up to view the baneful effects of certain soul-degrading customs which used to prevail and prevail still in Hindu society. In short, it has quickened it with a new life, the full

fruition of which is not yet.' That is unquestionably a true testimony. The only divergence of opinion will be as to its interpretation. What will this 'full fruition' be which is not yet? That it may be and will be a fruition bearing within it much of the thought and experience of Hindu poets and rishis every one will believe who holds by the Divine government and guidance of the nations. So long as it has at its heart the spirit and the power of Christ, the name it bears will matter not at all. Another able Bengali writer in a recently published historical work frankly faces the prospect of the disappearance of Hinduism before its younger rival, and refuses to regret such a result if Hinduism carries its message within Christianity and exercises there an enduring, and a far more widespread, influence. We refuse, indeed, to believe Mrs. Besant when she affirms that 'the propaganda of the Vedanta in the West is far more successful than that of Christianity in the East'. But we believe that the influence has not been altogether one-sided, and that the West might have learned more, and has yet much to learn in this school so ancient and so meditative. We may not consider that under that influence the interpretation of Christian truth will be in the direction of the 'New Theology' of the Rev. R. J. Campbell, which already has been claimed in India as a product of the Vedanta; but if 'Græcia capta' conquered her spiritual conquerors and imposed upon them many of her modes of thought, so that they rule us to this hour, we need not be surprised if a similar triumph should await captive India.

It is true that there is not yet much token of this within the Indian Christian Church. Were it otherwise, that Church would have rooted itself deeper than it has

yet done in the soil of India. There have been and are still great and greatly devoted Indian Christians. Personally and as a Church they have been and are, on the whole, a rebuke and a stimulus to those who are of the old faith. Drawn from every class, but especially from the lowest and most downtrodden, they hold forth an example of unity and progressiveness and of the service of others which is widely acknowledged. Yet it has to be admitted that the prospect of the speedy coming of the Kingdom of God in India would be dim, were it not for the confidence on the part of those who watch for it that already within Hinduism the Church of Christ exists. There are certain special circumstances in India that tend to isolate the Christian from his countrymen and to preserve the Indian Church as foreign and strange. And in the past little effort was made by the missionary to counteract this tendency. His people were to become Scotch Presbyterians, or his Church was to be the Church of England even in India. The typical product of mission work was such a man as Dr. Narayan Sheshadri, who said of himself once, 'I am just a black Scotchman.' Splendid Christians he and such as he were and are, of whom their adopted nationality has reason to be proud, but unfitted by that fact from exercising as wide and as living an influence as by their abilities and their character they might in the regeneration of their people. 'It was when Christianity appealed direct to the people,' says Sir William Ramsay, 'addressed them in their own language, and made itself comprehensible to them on this plane of thought, that it met the needs and filled the hearts of the Roman World.' It is in this direction certainly that the work of the future lies in the christianization of India, and those who

have set their hands to it are full of hope, recognizing as they do that while they are going forth to meet the East, the East is drawing near to them with ever-quickening step.

In what has been said, it is throughout Hinduism that has been kept in view as the one religion that need be reckoned with in India. For the adherents of other faiths are few in comparison with those whom this vast and complex system counts among its followers. And besides, its long and chequered history through unreckoned centuries has fashioned every section of the people to its mould and wrought its doctrines into the fibre of their being. In India perhaps more than elsewhere, because of the poverty that makes the thought of each day's need absorb them, a great body of the people are 'of the earth earthy' and scarcely lift their souls above the soil they till. In regard to the problems of religious inquiry their thought is that of the Irish peasant—'The feel of the spade in the hand is no different for all your talk.' And yet it is amazing how much one finds the souls even of such people to have been moulded and fashioned by the doctrines of their ancient faith. It is not safe to dogmatize widely in regard to a land so varied as India, but one may say with confidence that among vast populations of the very lowest rank a doctrine with such far-reaching effects on mind and character as that of Transmigration will be found to have stamped its impress. A transformation so radical as that which is in store for this system cannot come quickly nor can it be easily forecast. That it will come with much conflict there is already evidence. There are already thousands in India standing lonely and uncertain between two worlds, 'one dead, the other

powerless to be born.' Greater battles are being fought in the land than even those of their early legends when Krishṇa guided the car of Arjuna on the field of Kurukshetra. The result, we may be sure, will be of deep significance not only for India but for the world.

---

## V. TIDES OF THE SPIRIT[1]

THE political reforms of Lord Morley and Lord Minto have at length been finally adopted. India has taken a great step forward. No one supposes, however, that the mere increase in the political authority that Indians will now exercise in their own land is the chief advantage that will result to the country from those new responsibilities. Of all the objections that have been advanced against the reforms, one which has been urged in the name of the great body of the people of India, and which seems to have less of selfishness and more of reason in it than any other, is the objection that it benefits only a small aristocratic minority and leaves the lot of the silent majority no better, or perhaps even worse, than before. Whether or not that objection is well-grounded only time will determine, and the answer that it gives will be not to this question only, but to the final question whether India has or has not in her the breath of a new life, whether her people can ever be begotten again by the summons of a new call or the sense of a new responsibility. If those to whom the political opportunity has now come—few as they are

[1] Published in September 1909.

compared with the great mass of the population—realize at all worthily its implications and prove themselves equal to it, the effect cannot be confined to themselves; its influence will extend throughout the whole community. If, however, there is no such response, and it is supposed that the rewards of authority can be enjoyed without that discipline being undergone which is the condition of its being fitly exercised, we can only judge that India has finally squandered her moral strength and that, if indeed she has had a great past, she will have no future. But is there any people upon whom such a sentence must be pronounced? Especially, are we to suppose that the wells of the spirit in India, once springing up so richly, have become so dry that they cannot flow again?

A newspaper correspondent, touring in the East some years ago on behalf of one of the leading British journals, chose the Dufferin railway bridge in Benares as a fit type of the dominion of the English in India. If there be any truth in such a comparison then there is no element of reality in that dominion. It is illusion, *māya*. Certainly in India it is by the spirit only that a nation can be great. Nowhere in the world have the forces of the spirit proved themselves so powerful as in this land. It may be maintained that these forces have now finally spent themselves, that what is left to-day is only the shell ready to crumble at a touch to dust. That is what now by the new call that has come to the country has to be proved or disproved. Some certainly, even of the Indian people themselves, are inclined to resent the claim that it is in her spirituality that India's greatness has exclusively consisted in the past and should continue to consist solely or chiefly. It seems to them that spirituality means weakness, that it implies submission

to be trodden on. And perhaps some of those who exhort her to set her ambitions to this note do so the more willingly because they believe that a spiritual India will be content to remain a subject India. An ambition of this kind is a plaything that they hope will keep her quiet and submissive. It is not to be wondered at that some Indians, resenting those admonitions, would like to see their people freeing themselves from what appears to them to be a hampering inheritance and joining, in the company of Japan, the cult of 'efficiency'. It will suffice to cite here two expressions of this desire on the part of not a few Indians to set the course of the ship to the new direction in which all the world seems hastening. A young Indian studying in England writes as follows in a private letter:

> 'We come in contact with missionaries in India, with those who tell us that the riches of this world, that all things of the world, are naught—a philosophy which, alas! is too well believed in by us. I wish we could come more in contact with the hard-headed, business-like American or German, who would tell us how we, with our brilliant, versatile ability, might rise in the scale of nations. We do not want dry philosophy of inaction; we want "action", "*karma*" essentially. We are finding our mistake out.'

No country in the world has ever had so few who professed atheism or the doctrines of materialism as India has had in all her long and varied past. But even in that land there were in the days of Buddha the Chārvākas, who called the Vedas humbug and said, 'Let a man not go without butter even though he run into debt.' In a recent number of an Indian magazine some one, who calls himself 'A New Chārvāka', calls his countrymen to for-

sake their old ideals and join the other nations in this race for 'butter'.

'India has been idle during the past many centuries,' he says. 'Its asceticism and higher philosophy have hypnotized the people and arrested their natural function. Our search for more permanent things is very good in its way. . . . The barbarous nations of England and Germany invented the steam-engine and electricity which have worked more wonders than the religion of the Vedānta. We are tired of our ideal. . . . We have missed the path, and I think it is time for us to work. Would it not be wise to cease the religious activity for a time, at least, to regain the lost energy for handling more immediate things?'

One cannot doubt that just as to-day we have, instead of what their fathers were, the supple and successful Greek, the Jewish millionaire, so the mind of India might be diverted with much advantage of a kind from the mysteries of the unseen to the profits of the seen. And to a considerable extent this has been already proved in the case of the large number of wealthy and altogether worldly merchants that are to be found in the great business centres. But surely the example of those other nations should be sufficient to deter any wise lover of his country from deliberately setting before it such unworthy aims. Nor can we believe that such a fate as has befallen them is in store for India. Her political leaders show a higher sense of the meaning of her calling, and of the discipline that her sons must undergo if they are to fulfil that calling by means of the new opportunities that have been placed within their reach. There is visible to observers a distinct quickening of the national conscience from its old lethargy, a movement as of awakening from the deep slumber of the spirit. Mr. G. K.

Gokhale, the most far-seeing of India's political leaders, discerned, when as yet this great forward movement seemed only a dream, the coming of a time when the need would be urgent of trained and devoted men to give themselves in a truly religious spirit to the service of the coming nation. The Society of the Servants of India, which he founded, recognizes no distinctive religious principles—the time has not yet come when in the case of most of the leaders of the new generation their faith can be explicit and defined—but none the less its spirit and its energy have a religious source. More even than in the case of the Committee of Union and Progress in Turkey—and all the more as the problem that is set to these young Indians to solve is a far more difficult one than even that of the Young Turks—they must call to their help forces that only a religious motive can command. Only thus can they hope to exercise on this people, with whom religion has been a passion for three thousand years, an influence that will be deep and that will be abiding.

They and every one who would touch the heart and mould the life of India must go down among the silent masses of the people. They must turn their backs upon the cities and the life of the cities. It is a commonplace of commonplaces in regard to India to say that it is a land of villages. It is this fact, no less than the tenacity of their minds and the elusiveness of their thoughts, that has made it appear so often as if messages conveyed to the people of this land were writ on water. For the most part it is probable that they never reached their ears. If any one would know what India will be, if he would guess what forces are still dormant in her and of what she dreams, and especially if he desires to move

and mould her future, he must sit with the villager at his hut door, and buy with him and sell at his weekly market, and journey with him when he takes his pilgrim's staff and sets forth to some distant shrine. If he is a foreigner it is difficult indeed for him to come close enough to those simple children of the earth to form any true conception of the dim thoughts and impulses that move them. The nearest he can come to them, perhaps, is when he pitches his tent close by their village and gathers them around him to speak with them of whatever troubles them, and, by what means he may, to win their hearts. It is no easy thing to do in India. It seems as if, there more than anywhere else, the burden of existence weighs heavy upon each man's shoulders, bringing bitterness and distrust into his heart. They have little hold of a life that seems scarcely worth clinging to and little hold of one another. 'As in the great ocean', says one of their ancient books, 'one piece of driftwood meets another, and after meeting they again part from one another, such is the meeting of creatures.' The foreigner passing among them with his tent is a fragment of such driftwood, still more fugitive. As he sits in his tent-door under Orion and the Southern Cross after night has fallen, listening to the nearer sounds of the village and to those from the farther distance of the jungle, the sense of mystery that broods especially upon India seems fitly symbolized by his surroundings. The circle of the lamp within which he sits and the high lamps above him alone illuminate his darkness. The distant yap-yap of a jackal or the tom-tom of the temple drums come to him out of the dark. As he sits and listens, and the India that is to be looms up before him in strange dissolving shapes, he realizes that he can gain

surer guidance to that future from the stars above than from the obscurity around. 'The path of vision is easy', says a South Indian sage, 'but unless there be a light between eye and soul there is no vision.' The 'light between eye and soul' is furnished to one who would seek to understand and interpret India by sympathy with the longing to know the truth and to come near to God that in every age of her long history has lifted up her heart to heaven.

If only this stranger in their midst could estimate aright the currents that flow in the sluggish minds of those who sleep beside their cattle in the villages about his tent; if he could measure the capacity for religious passion of the pilgrims whose chants fall on his ear from far; if he knew what real strength yet resides in the ancient ascendancy of the Brāhman, who in this village and in that lords it over the unlettered folk; if he only could be sure of the direction to-day and the energy to-morrow of such silent forces round about him, how much more confidently he might prophecy. But he moves about even in the blazing sunlight of the day in a world not realized and only dimly guessed. At most he can adapt the words of the soothsayer in *Julius Caesar* to his case and say, 'In India's infinite book of mystery a little I can read,' and the purdah of the future hangs dark and menacing before him. If now and again an incident, a word overheard, seems to him to lift it, perhaps it is no more than his too eager fancy, or perhaps the momentary glimpse only renders him the more deceived.

For example, one morning he had set out on his daily errand while yet the cross hung low above the southern horizon, and, by the time 'the red was breaking', as they

express it, had entered with his company a sleepy hamlet where surely the strident voice of politics had never penetrated. They found the elders of the village crouched round a fire of stubble, warming themselves while the cattle lumbered past with many grunts. When the sahib halted by them, from under the penthouse covering of their blankets they turned on him their slow gaze, and, as he fetched a little book from his pocket, one brightened up and remarked with the confidence of knowledge, 'It is the *Kesari*'. The *Kesari*, whose editor, Mr. B. G. Tilak, is languishing in the Sirkar's jail in far-off Burmah, was the one point of contact that he had with printed matter, and as he and his simple-minded fellows sat and listened week by week to its version of the political situation, read to them by the one educated person of the village, one can imagine the steady growth within them of alienation from their rulers. In another village the actual process was observed. We stood and listened while from the same newspaper the Brāhman read to a silent circle of the canonization as a martyr and a hero of a Bengali anarchist, lately hanged for a peculiarly determined murder, of the funeral pyre of sandalwood, of the bare-footed procession of Calcutta's youth, of the ashes borne away in gold and silver vessels. And so the cattle go past, as they have gone perhaps for thousands of years, grunting as they go and breathing heavily—only to-day the mother buffalo pauses to take careful stock of the strange white visitor who stands hearkening; and the women hasten to the well, with the same quarrels and the same tales of scandal over which their mothers, too, waxed shrill in the days of Abraham; and the doves coo from every tree and the cry comes from far of a holy beggar claiming his share of the morning

meal. All things seem as they have been in India for millenniums, except for that voice that reads on of the murderer and of the Bengalis shouting his name as though it were that of a saint or hero, 'Kanai Lal-ke jai'. What is this new and sinister power that is making itself known even in these quiet places and to what thing of evil is it transforming India? It is the thought of these things and of unanswered questions that they bring that presses heavy on the spirit as one sits in his tent-door, looking into the dark, and up to Orion, and the slowly rising Southern Cross.

Then it is that one remembers that there are other currents that flow about the roots of these hills—almost as ancient as they—and along those valleys. Who can tell for how many centuries those footpaths have been trodden and retrodden by the feet of pilgrims, men and women, hiding under a ragged blanket hearts—sometimes at least—quick with a passion of unfulfilled desire? No doubt in the case of the majority what moves and calls them forth is nothing more than the custom of their fathers. Or perhaps it is what one more thoughtful than the others called a 'ripple of the mind', an impulse unaware of its own meaning, stirred by the wind of the Spirit, breathing as it listeth across the waters of the soul of man. One morning we had lost our way, and as the day broke were glad to see approaching a little group of men. But soon we found that they were as much strangers there as we. They were returning from the shrine of Khandoba, a god of the kin of Ashtoreth and the Paphian Venus, but with no Hellenic grace to gild his lust. He is of the family of Śiva, the 'Great God' of these regions, who seems to have taken up into his cultus so many of the dark aboriginal worships of the land. On every side

one sees the figure of his bull couchant before some shrine and can trace his symbols:

> The emblems of birth and the circlet of bones,
> And the light loves carved on the temple stones.

Śiva represents what is most repulsive in all the varied worship of this land, fear and lust and hate, and none of all his pantheon is less likely to fulfil a pilgrim's hopes than Khandoba. 'What did you get?' we ask them. 'Nothing.' 'Then why did you go there?' 'Why, to get a sight of the god.' And there on his hill-top they had seen him in all the glory of red paint, and perhaps had watched the quaking and quivering 'possessed' rushing madly up the temple stairs and uttering wild and incoherent prophecies. Or perhaps, uglier still, they had looked on while some little girl, vowed to him from birth, was married to the sword of the grim old warrior-god and made thus a 'bride of heaven' to live a degraded life on earth.

When that same morning another wayfarer had set us on our right road, we came presently to a hamlet where we could see, as we drew near it, the little saffron flags of another company of returning pilgrims. But this group and the worship they represented are very different from the first. They have come from Alandi, the birth-place of a saint and poet, and are going up, singing as they go snatches from his verse, to the shrine of the god he worshipped. Round this god, Viṭhoba of Pandhari, all that is best in Marathi poetry has gathered, and the poets and saints of Maharashtra, a wonderful galaxy, have poured forth at his shrine all the warmth of their devotion and all the gifts of their inspiration. Dnyāneshwar, in some respects the greatest of them all, from whose birth-

place these pilgrims have come, wrote his poem in the thirteenth century, and his name, with that of Tukārām, a contemporary of Milton, has its place in the praise and the worship of the people to this day. At the high seasons of festival at Pandharpur they go up, bringing with them, as their fancy is, to the central shrine those two who had loved so much to go there and to worship at the feet of Vitthal so long ago, and, as they pass from village to village for many days in their long pilgrimage, they cry aloud their names, ' Dnyānoba, Tukārām ; Dnyānoba, Tukārām '. The little company of pilgrims whom we met that morning sang to us, beating time with cymbals as they sang, a verse that ran somewhat to this effect :

> Whoso is wise, he is the lord of lords,—
> (Hearken ye all to Dnyānadeva's words),—
> Else for poor me such greatness were unmeet,
> The fitting place for sandals is the feet.
> Yet Brahmā and the gods bow down to me.
> O who with such an one compared can be?

There is surely something evangelic and uplifting in every faith that sings, and the faith of Dnyānoba and Tukārām is no exception. Through many of the songs of Tukārām especially runs the cry of the heart for God, the anticipated joy in His fellowship, a sense, however undefined, of the preciousness of His love. There are unnumbered cults and faiths in India, winds stirring strange ripples on the people's minds—some of them airs from heaven, some of them blasts from hell—there are philosophies profound and subtle that cast their desolating shadow over even the simplest hearts, but among them all the one well from which springs, and has sprung for centuries, a stream of living water is the *bhakti* worship, the ' loving faith ' that gathers about the names of certain gods. These pilgrims

with their cymbals and their songs testify that hearts in India, in spite of priest and ceremonial and superstition, yet lift their longings to the unknown God, and yearn to draw near and clasp His 'lotus feet'.

The *Kesari* and the songs of Tukārām—how will these and the influences they represent blend in the fashioning of India's future? What thing will be born from them and from the other, newer forces, some from above, some from beneath, that to-day is bringing to the land? Will religious aspiration or political passion be found the stronger power in the people's hearts? Perhaps, after all, India is growing weary of the unsatisfied search that has absorbed her for who knows how many thousand years. What tremendous results might be achieved if she diverted to the world of illusion—the world of kings and constitutions—the silent, steadfast passion that has been turned with constant question and desire to the real and the unknown. No greater mistake could be made than to suppose that there is no strength of purpose or resolution in the people of India. How else have those hill-sides been furrowed so deep by the feet of pilgrims that have come and gone throughout a thousand years? What strength of soul was theirs who, in the still more distant past, carved deep out of the solid rock cells for themselves and great cathedrals for their gods. Near by where our tent is pitched is a village that claims to be the birth-place of Vālmīki, fabled author of the heroic epic, the Rāmāyana. They tell a quaint tale of him, that he had been a robber lying in wait for passing travellers, when one day, not knowing his good or evil fortune, he laid hold of a Rishi, a saint of those old days, and the spoiler was spoiled. The spell of the holy man came upon him then and there, and the place of his feet is

carved in the stone unto this day; he was converted, or, as they say, entered into the absorption of *samādhi*. So profound was his meditation that, when the Rishi next passed by long after, he could not see him, but heard his unceasing repetition of the name of his god, 'Rāma, Rāma, Rāma', coming from the depth of an ant-hill. He had sat for so long still and motionless, save for that word, so the story runs, that the ants had built a nest all round about him. Saints and Rishis absorbed in what they conceived to be the divine, or rapt to a region of nothingness and silence, have never been lacking in India from the fabled days of Vālmīki until to-day.

Those tokens of the strength of the spiritual forces that are still awake in many a deep heart in India have been chosen from the common incidents of every day in a single district of the land. They could be paralleled a hundred times in every province. Wherever one goes, the prints of pilgrims' feet are 'numberless and holy all about him'. No doubt much of the reality and power that lay in former days behind those facts has passed away from them to-day. The pre-eminence of the Brāhman was originally, perhaps, attained because of his superior devotion and the unworldliness of his spirit; but the time when that was true of him, it must be admitted, is wrapped in the mists of antiquity. To-day for the most part the testimony of the low-caste men in regard to him is true: 'Brāhmans are like palm-trees, very high, but giving little shade to us poor people.' Nor can one wonder, with the constant pressure of poverty upon them, that in the case of the great majority of all classes their worship, in the expressive language of a proverb, is given first to 'Potobā, and only then to

Viṭhoba'. There are always everywhere the worshippers of 'Potobā', those—to translate into the words of Paul—'whose god is their belly', and perhaps there is more excuse for such worship in India than in most other lands. But that the old religious power is lying latent all the time one cannot doubt, and to govern India in oblivion of those slumbering fires is to commit a capital mistake. There are indications that they are awaking again to activity and that the future of India will be largely determined by the fuel that those passions find.

Already there is evidence that the combination of Indian religious intensity with Western science and Western politics is producing in some cases a chemical product as explosive and as dangerous as picric acid. During the Monsoon season in the Arabian Sea one sometimes hears of what may be described as a stray cyclone that has broken loose from its moorings and may descend at any moment upon the land, bringing destruction with it. Something similar seems to be happening in regard to the cyclonic religious passion that is part of the fundamental nature of the Indian people. Silent, dormant as it appears to have been for so long, it has begun to awake again, and, directed to temporal and unmoral ends, is proving an evil and a desolating force. The Bhagavadgīta is certainly, and has been for centuries, the most powerful religious Scripture in India. It has been quaintly described as 'the wonderful song that causes the hair to stand on end'. As a matter of fact it is a call to the consecration of every work to the service of God without thought of reward. Beautiful as its expression of that high summons is, and noble as its purpose seems to one who fills it with a Christian content, it remains true that to

the Indian reader the end to which it directs that complete devotion is an unmoral end, and the God to whose fellowship it calls may all the time be no God but a demon. Its original setting should suffice to remind us that the goal to which it may lead the striving spirit need not by any means be a worthy one. It is represented as first spoken with the purpose of persuading a hero to go forth to battle in violation of his natural human instincts of compassion. No doubt it has for the most part in modern times been used, as quite well it may, as a means to the repression of selfishness and to the culture of the soul. But if it came first from the lips of Krishṇa calling Arjuna to war and the breaking of the bonds of kinship, it may well come in the same way again. We need not wonder that Bengali anarchists have walked to the scaffold, reciting as they went verses of the Gīta. The Song of the Blessed One has been adopted apparently as one of the badges of the party of anarchy, and to be a student of this Scripture is almost accepted as a reason why one should be watched by the police.

But perhaps the strangest and most ominous feature of the religious situation in India is the appearance of what is called 'Matri-puja', the worship of the Mother. The watchword of the Indian national awakening is 'Bande Mataram', 'Hail to the Mother', and in the case of many who use it, it is quite a harmless and commendable expression of patriotic sentiment. No doubt it in many cases connotes as well the meaning that some foreigners, innocent of Sanskrit learning, have given it, 'Down with the English.' But it may, and in some cases certainly does, point to something still more serious. A young educated Indian who has lost his faith in the gods of his

fathers, and has found to take their place no object to which he can give his devotion, is a particularly pathetic spectacle, placed as he is 'between two worlds, one dead, the other powerless to be born'. What wonder if the passion of surrender to the service of his country should come to him in such a case as a fierce fanaticism? 'The Mother' is then to him an unmoral deity for whose sake anything may be done or dared. And if with this the thought of another 'Mother', the ferocious Kali, thirsting for blood, is associated, to what hideous results may not this cult lead? It is in Bengal that the worship of this goddess has always prevailed most widely, and it is in Bengal that we find the head-quarters at once of the bomb conspiracy and of this 'Mother-worship'. A missionary in that province, who is peculiarly able to speak with knowledge of those matters, writes as follows in an Indian newspaper:

'Devotion to the "Mother", be she "Matri-bhumi" (the Mother-land) or Ma Kali, must be entire and unreserved; her supposed commands alone impose absolutely imperative obligation, no consideration whatever weighing against them as even the small dust of the balance, and in one form or another she will have blood. In a word, the Matri-puja of to-day is thuggee, with "white goats"—in a sense in which the phrase can now be understood—for victims instead of "swadeshi" travellers.'

But, one will object, that may be true of the grossly superstitious multitude, but not of the educated few in whose hands are India's destiny. At the same time, so long as this cyclonic power is, as it were, loose from its moral moorings, who can say that education or enlightenment, apart from that higher control which they have not

in themselves, will keep any one from being swept away in its tempestuous course? And perhaps some, self-restrained themselves, may play with those forces, seeking to use them for their ends, until they find that they have passed beyond their power to control. Arabindo Ghose, who has recently been honourably acquitted from the charge of complicity with the bomb conspirators, is, it seems, a man of strong religious feelings. He has been described by Mrs. Besant as a Mazzini, but a fanatical Mazzini. His education at St. Paul's School and at Oxford has not apparently quenched his religious ardour. When he was released from prison, where he had lain long under suspicion of anarchism, he said, 'I attribute my escape to no human agency, but, first of all, to the protection of the Mother of us all, who has never been absent from me, but has always held me in Her arms and shielded me from grief and disaster; and secondarily, to the prayers of thousands which have gone up to Her on my behalf ever since I was arrested.' He has since given to the world divine messages that, he says, were given to him while he lay in prison awaiting the judgement of the court. Those messages are a call to make great the Sanātan Dharma, the eternal Hindu religion, in order that thereby India may be made great. 'My *Shakti* has gone forth,' says one oracle, indicating that the giver of it is Kali, with whose *Shakti*, or 'female principle', is associated the worst abominations of Hinduism.

Those sinister suggestions awaken many doubts as to the future towards which India is hastening, even though it be with the shade of Huxley or of Herbert Spencer at the helm. The outlook would seem dark enough were it not that there is at work in the land

another leaven in which surely lies its hope. For many, as has been said, the message of the Gīta has been and is a call to battle with no other foe than a rebellious heart; and it is not too much to claim that much of its power to-day rests in the fact that it can be filled with the truth of Christ and be made to echo with His music. For many the Motherland claims a pure devotion, that is at the same time a devotion to those high ideals of a people's good that Christianity has taught to men. There is a famous tale among the ancient Indian legends telling of the churning by the gods of the Sea of Milk, while they sought to obtain Amrita, the divine nectar. Many strange things were cast forth from the waters by their labours, among others the most deadly poison, ere they obtained at last the cup of immortality. The story seems a parable of the spiritual ferment that we see troubling the deep waters of the Indian sea. The forces that sleep silent in the peasants' hearts, or send them forth as pilgrims on some far and dimly comprehended quest, may break forth for a time in anarchy and frenzied superstition. But that is, we are sure, only a passing phase, and those powers are coming more and more under a mightier and a worthier dominion. Is he a too credulous prophet who descries the Stronger drawing near that He may take under His dominion those strong passions of the spirit? *Ecce Deus fortior te qui veniens dominabitur tibi.*

# VI. INDIAN IDEALS AND PRESENT-DAY REALITIES[1]

IT is difficult to believe, as one sits in one's tent door far in the heart of India amid sounds and sights and scents such as have been unchanged since Buddha meditated under the Bô tree, since Alexander the Great swept through the land and was straightway forgotten—it is difficult to believe that one quarter of the world is at this moment one vast battle-field. An old Indian Christian—and as such one with a special bond to the 'Christian' West—always asks whether the 'fire', as he calls it, the great devouring flame, is still raging. It seems sometimes a nightmare from which we shall presently wake, a trick of 'māyā' or illusion with no substance in it—till one day a message comes of a friend wounded or dead on the field, or a cable with the words, 'All well', which are to be interpreted as signifying that a certain East Coast Scottish town has been reached by Zeppelins but that those who matter most are safe. India—the real India—has never troubled greatly in the past, and does not trouble greatly now, over the rise and fall of empires or the victory or defeat of kings. It is true that Bombay and Karachi are feverishly busy with the coming and going of troops and of munitions; even Poona and Belgaum and Nagpur have their War Relief Committees, and in such towns as these women of every

[1] Published in May 1918.

community respond with ready sympathy and help to the need of the wounded. But here we are in an older and a remoter India. Here for the most part the only things that interest are the immediate physical needs of to-day and of to-morrow; or if thought reaches beyond these it reaches so far beyond that to it things near and seen are nothing. There is no mean for the true Hindu. He is seldom an altruist. He is either a gross and sensual egoist, whose god is 'Potobā'—the stomach and its needs—or he is one for whom there is no other at all since his own selfhood has vanished. Thus every way India escapes from the burden of a world gone wrong that presses so heavily on the West. Here it is either the pain of an empty belly that brings distress, or it is the far deeper, subtler agony—or bliss—of a personality dissolved and merged in the nameless and unutterable One.

And yet this is a region where in the past great events have happened and over which great passions of ambition, great tides of the spirit, have swept in other days. Across these plains, legend tells us, Rāma drove Rāvana and his hosts in such a rout as that which we have often dreamed of during these last three years, but with a German Kaiser filling to admiration the place of the demon king. The old story is that the righteous cause of Rāma was espoused by Hanumān or Māruti, the monkey god, who at the head of his tribes lent powerful assistance in defeating the enemy of civilization. It would never do to suggest that the chivalrous aid that India has rendered to her 'partners' in the Empire—as she is now permitted to consider them—is prefigured in the help of the faithful Hanumān to his Lord. Perhaps it was this old legend that caused strange tales to travel abroad in India at the

outbreak of the war as to the forces that Britain was arraying against Germany. It was affirmed that monkeys had been trained to fire off great guns at the word of command and that they could be seen embarking in the Bombay harbour, and that tigers too were to be let loose upon their kindred the enemy. When the shadows gather upon these wide Central Indian plains Rāma and Rāvana and Hanumān and the rest may still be fancied, great dim figures, hastening onward, pursuers and pursued. But there are other and very different traditions here as well. Thirty miles to the north stands in a valley near Ajunta that amazing array of caves, carved from the living rock, adorned with sculpture and painting, that in their ruins after more than a thousand years overwhelm us with the thought of the imagination that conceived them, of the hearts and hands that fashioned them. But to-day all the power that Buddha awakened to such great ends in India has passed so utterly from the land as an acknowledged force that the caretaker at the Caves misnames the sage after a Hindu warrior and calls him Bhima. Twenty miles to the east is village after village, amid whose mud hovels rise the ruined palaces of kings of forgotten dynasties that ruled here once and challenged the power and awoke the jealousy of the Mogul Emperors themselves. And six miles to the north is the battlefield of Assaye. With good fortune we may still find there, turned up by the wooden plough or trampled under the bullocks' feet, one of those cannon balls that seem the innocent playthings of the childhood of the world beside the subtle and varied engines of death and mutilation that the ingenuity of to-day has devised. This, which the war bulletins might nowadays describe as 'slight liveliness in the Assaye sector', was really one

of the great battles of the world which more than any other single event determined the fate of India for at least a century, and gave Britain as her mistress a place in the sun that she was to pay for in bitter jealousy and dislike. But the battle-field on which the conqueror of Napoleon first learned the art of victory lies silent and unvisited in the heart of this land of far horizons.

There are two typical figures in this Indian landscape —the one, the money-lender, implacable, knowing no law but his own profit; the other, the 'holy man', to whom the world and its gains are but a little dust under his feet. The first is he who to-day—and one doubts if it was ever otherwise—holds the East in fee, lending the poor cultivator five rupees, and then at a year's end compelling him to take his bill and write four score. The other—a far rarer discovery, but not yet altogether vanished from the land—has passed beyond good and evil, 'above the battle', to a region of indifference and calm.

> Alike are gold and dross to me,
>   Jewel and common stone the same.
> Ah, ne'er my soul can harmèd be,
>   Walk I in heaven or in the flame.
> Since all the universe are we,
>   Then what to us is praise or blame? [1]

It was a tailor-poet who sang this five or six hundred years ago, and it still represents the ideal of attainment for the Hindu sage. 'Dispassion' is a goal which, whether men ever attained it or not, 'bakes no bread' and leaves the neighbouring usurer to oppress and to enjoy his gains. This temper does not light the fires of Smithfield or let loose the dogs of war; it leaves it to the other man to do so.

[1] Macnicol, *Psalms of Marāthā Saints*, p. 48.

Sweet to its tender is the cane; nor less
To him who crushed it in the cruel press,—
Sweet with no bitterness;

So he who deems a friend or foe the same,
Alike unmovèd though the world should blame,
Or though it grant him fame.[1]

That is a gracious attitude, but its grace is aesthetic, not moral or spiritual. Its beauty is that of the Apollo Belvedere, perhaps—not that of the Ecce Homo. There is a very moving story that is told of a holy man who, when a British soldier in the wild days that followed on the Mutiny thrust him through with his bayonet, turned his dying eyes on his murderer and said, 'And thou, too, art He.' To the Christian the saying is a beautiful lie. The murderer is not God but God's negation, and to be calmly indifferent to good and ill, to wrong and right, is not to be God-like or to be holy. Such 'pacifism' is all the more dangerous, whether it be found in the East or the West, just because it seems so beautiful and austere.

A product of this super-moral attitude that reveals its real ugliness was a 'saint' whose followers a short time ago gathered from far and near to a village in this neighbourhood to celebrate his death, or rather his absorption into the final truth of things. He would not be reborn; he had attained; he had 'cut short the eighty-four', the series of eight million four hundred thousand re-embodiments as God, or man, or beast, that are appointed for the unillumined mass of men. He was the founder of one of those sects that spring up continually all over the soil of Hindu Pantheism, and that then, 'because they have no depth of earth', as quickly wither away. He seems to have been an illiterate peasant, an

[1] Ibid., p. 37.

Indian Rasputin, who, like his Russian parallel, gathered a great following of those who believed him to be above the laws, moral and physical, that bind us others. An intelligent and educated disciple, who spoke excellent English, declared that he had seen him eat a lump of opium as big as his fist, and that it was to him no more harmful than if it had been bread. Still more startling to Hindu ideas was the fact that he drank daily many bottles of 'country liquor', and it was to him no more than milk, and, crowning reversal of all laws of piety, he even ate the flesh of the cow and consorted, a Brāhman himself, with the lowest outcastes. The laws of Nature and of Hindu prescription were suspended in the case of one of such attainment as he had reached. The wheel of life continued to revolve, indeed, and he acted as a man among men, but these actions were not really his at all. He broke no moral law and was bound by no law of nature. His feet stayed here, indeed, but not himself. He had escaped.

To our Western ideas this seems sometimes the very land of topsy-turvy—a world seen through a stranger looking-glass than that of Alice. Our final despair is the goal—not of their desire, for to desire it is to lose it—but of their desire extinguished. 'When the jewel of desire comes to one's hand,' says one of those seers who look with empty eye-sockets into the dark, 'there is always victory over desire.' They seem to our view to make their universe a desert and call that victory. But these drear wastes—some of the mystics of the West have known them—are the habitation only of a few souls—shall we call them rare or rarefied? The most of those who profess to be their followers, like the eater of opium and of beef of whom I have spoken, are mere

charlatans. The greater part of the actual Hinduism of to-day sprawls across the land, naked and gross like the red-painted stones that represent its gods. Sensitive souls from the West who have inherited a scorn and horror of idolatry that has come down to them through three millenniums are revolted at the sight of it and pass hasty judgements. 'Hinduism is hell,' says one who recently visited India, a scholar touched to the fine issues of Christian idealism. That is what some of India's own seers have thought and expressed in their milder language when they looked at much that has always flourished beneath the wide aegis of that religion.

> A stone with red paint plastered o'er,
> Brats and women bow before.

So says one of themselves. And again the same saint and poet describes in scornful words the religious mendicant, so feared and so revered in India:

> A greedy cat, he steals
> From door to door, begging from men his meals.
>
> What Tukā says is true,—
> The sack is empty and the measure too.[1]

The study of the science of religion may explain this animistic worship, and show that in it are seeds of the highest spiritual aspiration; but the verdict of Tukārām remains true to-day—'the sack is empty and the measure too'.

But it is one thing to acknowledge and denounce the faults of one's own people and of their religious practice, and it is quite another thing to have these faults pointed out by a stranger. When Lord Curzon hinted that veracity was not a universal virtue in Bengal this gibe

[1] Macnicol, *loc. cit.*, p. 89.

outweighed a hundred political benefactions, and will never be forgotten. So when a distinguished Christian scholar on a visit to India spoke of the tutelary deity of Mysore as a she-devil—which in her origin she undoubtedly is, and she has not yet by any means entirely sloughed the horns and the hoofs—he was guilty of an unforgivable indiscretion. Mr. Lionel Curtis has been discovering how difficult a matter it is in the face of this Indian sensitiveness and suspicion to promote the Round Table system of inquiry and discussion, though this is a method likely to prove peculiarly useful in the circumstances of the country. There is no fact that India's foreign rulers need more to keep in mind than that no people is so sensitive to insult, real or imagined, as a proud nation fallen to a condition of dependence. It is a real hindrance to India's emancipation that, just when the spirit of nationalism and the pride of a great past awaken in any section of the people, at the same time the resentment of foreign rebuke and foreign guidance becomes stronger. We wonder that the social reform movements are so weak, that patriotic leaders are so slow to realize that the first step towards recovered greatness is an acknowledgement of the evils that have cast the nation into her present bondage. But really the new forces can never operate in full strength and activity until the conflict between them and what we may consider a foolish and narrow patriotism is at an end. We have all heard of the wife who was being beaten by her husband, but who immediately forgot the domestic difference to reinforce her husband against the attack of the philanthropist who would have helped her. It is no easy matter for a foreigner to guide a people justly proud of their ancient teachers into religious truth, nor is it an easy

matter to guide them to political maturity. We must realize that in both cases the more the stranger's hand is withdrawn the more will they feel free to cast out the enemies that are of their own household.

The effect of the present situation in India upon the mind of a patriot, proud of the ideals of his ancestors, is to make him cling to them blindly and contrast them, much to their advantage, with those of the West. Britain and India are, in fact, deeply enough differentiated in character to make it easy, especially in the circumstances of the relations they bear to each other, for each to exaggerate the other's faults and their own virtues. The war has given the champions of India an opportunity of setting her temper and spirit in self-complacent contrast to the violence of Europe. 'The power by which the West thrives', Dr. Rabindranath Tagore has recently been telling Japan, 'is an evil power ; so long as it is held on her own side she can be safe while the rest of the world trembles. The vital ambition of the present civilization in Europe is to have exclusive possession of the devil.' He sees 'the bloodhounds of Satan bred in the kennels of Europe'. He hears the voice of Western civilization coming to him 'through the din of war, the shrieks of hatred, the wailings of despair, through the churning up of the unspeakable filth which has been accumulating for ages in the bottom of this civilization'. No wonder that he seeks to turn away the eyes of India and Japan from viewing such a spectacle, and bids them rather admire and pursue the ancient Oriental ideal of calm and contemplation. According to Sir Alfred Lyall, the ascetic on the bank of the Jumna looks upon a world of noise and of ambition streaming past him, and says:

Is it a god or a king that comes?
 Both are evil but both are strong.
With women and wantoning, trumpets and drums,
 Carry your gods and your kings along.

He turns away from such phantoms to the real.

But what is this which India sets before herself as the real? Was it not Hegel who said that God did not want either empty heads or palsied hearts? It seems sometimes to us of the West that the goal of the Indian sages is such a state of desolation. They would rest content with a wealth that is dearth. But Dr. Rabindranath Tagore is the son of one of India's leaders in social and religious reform, who, though he was of the true company of India's saints, was no traveller towards the 'deceitful repose' of Quietism. And the poet himself, when he is not contrasting East and West in the spirit of a somewhat jealous patriotism, can utter a fine summons to conflict, such a conflict as has constrained so many of the very flower of Europe's sons to gird on their armour. He tells us how, when he was hoping for peace and ease, 'for a place of rest after the day's dusty toil', suddenly 'I found thy trumpet lying in the dust'. 'Sleep is no more for me, my walk shall be through showers of arrows. For to-night thy trumpet shall be sounded.' We are too ready to see India's ideal as a cowardly contentment with things as they are, as lethargy and sloth and indifference to good or evil. India also on her side is apt to see our struggles as the result of covetousness or ambition. Neither of these indictments is just, but each points out a fault of the other's qualities when these are viewed, in the one case through the distorting medium of contempt, in the other through the medium no less distorting of dislike and fear.

We have ourselves pictured the Anglo-Indian from the days of Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* as afflicted with a bad liver and an irritable disposition. Whether justly or not, India often sets down his imperiousness and impatience to sheer bad temper, and, so doing, she turns with the more complacency to her own calm as something far higher. A young American, losing patience with the arrogant claims of a well-known Indian 'swāmi', or religious teacher, flatly characterized one of his statements as a lie. The Indian, looking down upon him with a remote gaze as though he were contemplating some variety of insect, replied: 'Young man, you have been eating too much beef.' A quaint little poem by a Marāthā poetess expresses this Indian ideal of tranquillity which no breeze of earth can ruffle. It is addressed by her to her brother, a noted saint, and is a remonstrance with him because she supposed him to have lost his temper and for that reason to be keeping his door shut when she asked him to let her in.

> Graciously thy heart incline;
> Open to me, brother mine!
>
> He's a saint who knoweth how
> To the world's abuse to bow.
> Great of soul indeed is he,
> Wholly purged of vanity.
> Surely he whose soul is great
> Is to all compassionate.
> Thou pervading Brahman art;
> How should anger fill thy heart?
>
> Such a poisèd soul be thine,
> Open to me, brother mine![1]

[1] Macnicol, *Psalms of Marāthā Saints* (Heritage of India Series), p. 41.

'Let us not confuse', said Cardinal Mercier recently to his priests in Belgium, 'hatred, a vice, with the spirit of righteous vengeance, a virtue.' How to find the middle way between a selfish indifference and a no less selfish passion of revenge is no easy problem, but such is certainly the way of security and strength. If the error of Europe is written large in blood to-day, the error of India has had consequences no less grievous. It would be interesting but difficult for a philosophic historian to weigh in the balances against each other the evil results from a fiery moral indignation on the one hand, too ready to grasp the weapons of punishment, and from moral lethargy on the other, turning away from an evil world to pursue its own self-culture in emptiness and isolation. When one considers the oppression and degradation of millions in India, left thus in contempt apart, 'women and Sudras, born of sin', and those more contemptible still, the 'untouchables', one cannot think that the killing of the body is as evil in its consequences as this slaying of the soul.

In this district of India, as in every district of the land, there is a class of people that are thrust outside the village walls, so that their presence may not bring pollution. An old tradition connects them with the demon world, and they are treated as sub-human. In medieval pictures sometimes a devil is introduced in the background of a religious scene, and similarly the Mangs are allowed on occasion to stand at a safe distance outside a temple and beat a drum. They are like the gargoyles outside a medieval cathedral. This is the most that the Hindu civilization, for all its ideals of compassion and of calm, has been able to do for these poor people throughout its long history. Instead of helping them to self-respect

it has kept them down in ignorance and slavery and closed for them the door of hope. To-day another civilization has come among them, and some of them have fled to its protection. Christianity has brought a message of a love that labours and suffers and of the possibilities that are open to the most lowly. It will be long before they can climb out of the deep pit in which they have lain so long, but one can see that already a new hope has gleamed before them and new horizons have opened on their narrow lives. During a recent epidemic of plague it was these despised outcasts who rose above fear and, making themselves the servants for love's sake of their old contemners, fought the disease with a courage and a self-forgetfulness that are far above the mood of contemplation. It was they, too, who, hearing of the distress of Belgian orphans, gave out of their poverty so prodigious a sum—though it may seem contemptible to us—as Rs. 800.

Dr. Rabindranath Tagore said the other day to an American interviewer: 'You put God far from you. With us it is different. We treat God as we treat our friends. It is from lack of nearness to God, from absence of right personal relations one with another, out of greed and materialism, that all war and conflict comes. These are the causes of this great conflict.' We shall not say 'Tu quoque'; we shall acknowledge, as we must, our fault. It is not our ideal that is amiss, but we who have been untrue to it. It is an ideal that unites conflict with inward tranquillity, and that calls ever to conflict. There is no discharge in this war. 'Calm's not life's crown, though calm is well.' A Japanese friend of India has been calling her people to demand to be equipped in all the panoply of militarism. Dr. Rabindranath Tagore, on

the other hand, has been calling Japan to turn from her new ambitions back to the ancient dreams of peace. India that sets in the forefront of her ideals that of *ahimsa* or 'non-killing', that is, kindness to all creatures, is demanding as a right that all her sons be trained for war and permitted to carry arms.

What do these contradictions and bewilderments mean except that a nation cannot know herself until she is free and unperplexed by the bitterness and jealousy that tutelage too often brings? When that time comes she will perhaps learn to discern the true enemy and to sharpen her sword against him. Then she may realize that nearness to God comes not by way of effortlessness and the empty heart, but by way of evil purged and love obeyed even if it have to be obeyed in blood and tears. Her own saint, Kabīr, calls her to such a battle:

Gird on thy sword and join in the fight!
Fight, O my brother, so long as life lasteth! . . .
It is for the kingdom of Truth, of Contentment and of Purity that this battle is raging:
And the sword that ringeth most loudly is the sword of His Name.

# PART III

# IDEAS

## VII. HINDUISM AS MYSTICISM

THE word mysticism is one of those vague and comforting words that seem to satisfy people without being understood, and perhaps satisfy them all the better just because they are not clearly understood. It has had a great vogue of recent years, partly due to a genuine return from the wilderness of a barren rationalism to inwardness and experience in religion, partly to the recrudescence of superstition that has characterized recent times. It describes, however, a real element, sometimes leading to good and sometimes to evil, that is found in all genuine religious life, but that is found more markedly in some types of feeling and thought than in others. It is found in unusual richness in India for, I think, two reasons. One of these is that India shows us a people that have, it may be claimed, more earnestly occupied themselves with the search for God and more passionately longed for God than perhaps any other people. Therefore if mystical experience be understood as meaning the experience of direct and immediate intercourse with God or the longing for such experience, it is to be expected that it will be found in special abundance among such a people. The second reason why mysticism is a marked characteristic of Indian thought is that Indian thought has always, for whatever reason, been possessed with a passion for final unity. It has demanded always

that its thinkers should not pause in their pilgrimage of thought till they have reached an ultimate One and passed into its silence. Thus two types of mysticism are to be found in India. There is the devotional mysticism that obeys the pull of the heart and that will not be stayed until it rests upon the heart of God. This it shares with the Hebrew saints and psalmists and with many Christian saints. The other, the intellectual quest for an all-inclusive unity, is more peculiarly India's own. The Hebrew had the first, the thirst of the heart for God, the living God: he had not this other, the desire to breathe the thin air where the Absolute is believed to dwell. In the Hebrew, as some one has said, 'the lead of thought, the metaphysical *flair*, is entirely wanting'. The Hindu, on the other hand, is incurably metaphysical.

The worth of any mysticism, its spiritual and moral value, depends upon the character of the goal to which it looks and which it desires to reach. It is only a method, a way, a movement, often a storm, of the soul. Its effects may be good or evil according to the ideal vision that beckons it on. Accordingly we find that Indian mysticism is of every moral quality, sometimes hideously degrading, sometimes beautifully ennobling, sometimes moving the heart to compassion, sometimes emptying and paralysing it. It is a quest for reality, a desire to escape from mutation and disappointment to something stable and satisfying, a surge of the soul towards the Infinite—and as such it has never ceased to compel the soul of India. One of its earliest and most moving expressions is to be found in the famous prayer of the Upaniṣad, 'From the unreal lead me to the real; from darkness lead me to the light; from death lead me to immortality.' That passion and aspiration has ex-

pressed itself in many fashions in Indian religious exercise and Indian religious speculation, and the prevailing type and texture of religion is in consequence what we may properly term mystical.

There is not perhaps much that is characteristically Indian in the animistic mysticism which we find still flourishing in the land to-day as it has flourished through all the centuries. There is a crude kind of 'mystical union' in that possession by the god which is to be seen in many a temple in India, as it is to be seen in most low forms of religion. In connexion with the worship of the village goddesses, the 'Mothers', and of such an aboriginal god as Khandoba, god-possession is of frequent occurrence. It is supposed to bring an increase of vital force to the possessed one, and one may see him suddenly dashing with extraordinary speed up the flights of stairs that lead to the hill-top where Khandoba's temple stands, or again seeking to demonstrate his divine vigour by breaking chains in the temple precincts. Sometimes he prophesies, the god speaking through him. The condition is induced by the beating of a drum or by ecstatic dancing, producing often an appearance of unconsciousness when his soul is supposed to leave the body and become united with the god.

Again we see hypnotic states induced by means of the constant repetition of the name of a god. In a legend that is told of an Indian saint he is said to have gone on repeating the name of Rāma till white ants built their nest about him, and still from the midst of the ant-hill the name came, as he went on repeating it in a condition of *samādhi* or trance. The prevalence of such trance-conditions in India is no doubt derived from primitive sources, as also are the practices of Yoga, which are, no

doubt, of very ancient origin. By means of postures and breathing exercises it was believed that power was obtained over the senses, and thereafter followed meditation and the concentration of the mind upon some single object until with the coming of a state of ecstatic unconsciousness the *yogi* was believed to draw near to God. How far these practices are related to what is called Shamanism among primitive peoples and how far they belong to a higher region of mental exercise it is not easy to say. The results that are claimed for them, such as the power to become invisible, to travel cross-legged through the sky, to touch and feel with the hand the sun and moon (William Blake, the poet, said he could touch the sky with his stick), if literally understood, as they usually are, would class them with magic rather than mysticism. Evelyn Underhill distinguishes between these by affirming that 'magic wants to get, mysticism wants to give'. The *yoga* ritual certainly often agrees with the definition of a magical rite as 'a tremendous forcing-house of the latent faculties of man's spiritual nature'. We can understand that these trance conditions, without giving any fellowship with God, induce a sense of enlargement and power unknown to the waking consciousness. Suggestions flow into the quiescent mind, though they are not likely to be of the character of a revelation of the divine. The diligent practice of these means of concentrating and strengthening the mind—what is called in Sanskrit 'onepointedness'—is more commonly found in India than anywhere else in the world, and, if it does not lead to any increase of knowledge of God, it gives at least a control over the movements of the mind that is of value. Of course, on the other hand, these practices are very commonly made use of to deceive

and have nowhere been so exploited and abused as in India. 'Samādhī or trance', says Professor Har Dayal in the *Modern Review*, as quoted in Dr. Farquhar's *Crown of Hinduism*, 'is regarded as the acme of spiritual progress. How strange it is that the capacity for swooning away should be considered the acme of wisdom! It is very easy to lose consciousness if one has strong emotions and a feeble intellect. To look upon an abnormal psychological condition produced by artificial means as the sign of enlightenment was a folly reserved for Indian philosophers.'

There are other crude methods of obtaining union with the deity that are to be found among the many survivals of primitive worship that India still shows to us. There is, for example, marriage of the worshipper to the god with its consequence that the girl so married can marry no one else. There may be different causes for this practice, which we see in higher forms in the spiritual nuptials of mysticism, but no doubt one impulse behind it was that of getting into closer fellowship with the source of all life. The desire to promote the fertility of the fields, to obtain more fulness of life, is apparently one of the motive powers in primitive religion explaining much that later became overlaid with other ideas. The worshipper wishes to obtain the *mana*, the strength of the god. A group of stones, daubed with red, in nearly every village represents these, often nameless, givers of strength. This is often indicated by the fact that close by are the putting stone and the Indian clubs and the wrestling-pit of the village athletes. Again the same desire for communion is seen in the drinking of the blood of the animal, or, when no animal is sacrificed, as is the case in most worships in modern India, the eating

of the coco-nut offered before the idol. It is common to see during any festival the crowd scrambling for pieces of coco-nut scattered among them after being presented to the god. They have little enough idea of getting anything but something good to eat on a day of festival and enjoyment, but behind all these things is the desire to obtain the life of the god. That motive is no doubt even present in the Śākta worship when they 'drink, drink, drink, until they fall on the ground in utter helplessness'. For we remember that William James says that 'the drunken consciousness is part of the mystic consciousness'.

Thus it appears that 'mysticism is part of our ancestral heritage, of our submerged and savage past'. It is not necessarily gross because it has a gross origin: it is not necessarily unspiritual because it springs from physical roots. The fact, as Dr. E. Caird used to say, that the child is father of the man does not mean that the man is merely a larger child. 'As the psyche grows', says Miss May Sinclair, 'this desire (for life, for physical strength, for the *mana* of the god) grows with it . . . ; it grows into a consuming passion; it passes beyond physical bounds; and the Love of Life becomes the Love of God.'

When we turn from these crude movements of the blind soul to the mystical quest for union with the Absolute we seem to have travelled far enough from the childhood of the world. Man has become old and weary and his idea of power and where power is to be sought is very highly 'sublimated' and very far from being primitive. The god of the primitive worshipper is a very full-blooded being, and his gifts are strength and children and enlarged life. But in the region of the thought of the sages of the Upaniṣads we are breathing a very different and a far more

rarefied atmosphere. But still it is the desire to climb to the divine heights that is the motive, the desire for illumination, for peace, for life even if it be a life that is indistinguishable from death. Other thoughts have come to make the way of the seeker harder than it was in earlier ages. Because of the doctrine of Transmigration and *Karma* the goal of peace is seen to be attainable only by deliverance from life. And further, beyond the confusions of polytheism, the multitude of gods, there must be a final One, and the Indian thinker cannot be content until he reaches that far land where He dwells, even if he has to lay aside his personality in order to reach Him. This Ultimate or Brahman is that-which-alone-absolutely-is, permanent, immutable, free from all 'becoming', unattached to the finite, and beyond the reach of the 'here' and the 'now'. That on the one side; and on the other a self which, somehow, holds of that unapproachable reality, which has in it an 'unsundered something' which essentially is reality. The coming together of these, so separated by a world of impermanence and illusion, is the attainment of peace and union.

This is accomplished by the Indian sages by the method of denying the reality of all else except the real that is Brahman and the real that is the soul, and by identifying the two. It is a mark of all mysticism to contemn all material things: the consuming passion for the ultimate seems to reduce to ashes all else than that incombustible reality. But here, as in so much else, India goes all the way and, in at least its most influential thinking, declares all but Brahman to be illusion and dream. And so, as a consequence, we have an attainment of union which is absorption and plunges the soul into the abyss of unconsciousness. 'That which is that

subtle essence, in it all that exists has its self. It is the true. It is the Self, and thou, O Svetaketu, art it.'

Is this goal of silence, of 'emptiness and nothingness', the true mystic goal? In India, as elsewhere, the mystic seeker finds it hard to make up his mind as to how to answer this question. He wants final oneness and will not be content with less, but he wants also communion and fellowship, which requires that personal identity remain. The thinkers are mostly of the former sort: they will have no half-way house. Whatever happens they will go the whole way and pay the whole price. When Vāskali asked the sage Bāhva what the Atman was, the sage gave no answer. And a second time and a third, when asked, he remained silent. Then, when asked once more, he said, 'Do you not understand that I have answered you. That Atman is silence.'

Pantheism is always a peril in the way of the mystic seeker after union and there is too much pantheism here to satisfy us as to the religious and moral worth of the relationship that he attains. Those distinctions are obliterated which are necessary for a moral life and personal religion. A 'holy man' sitting by the wayside in his saffron robe, when asked how many gods there are, replied 'Two', pointing to his two eyes. That is to say, he himself is God. This, though it has its parallel even in what calls itself Christian mysticism, has passed beyond into a region where the religious and moral life cannot persist. The same religious attitude, as Miss May Sinclair points out in her *Defence of Idealism*, is described almost in the very words of the Upaniṣads by Julian of Norwich: 'I it am: I it am: I it am that is highest: I it am that thou lovest: I it am that thou enjoyest: I it am that thou servest: I it am that thou

longest for: I it am that thou desirest: I it am that thou meanest, I it am that is all.' This is an attainment that it is difficult to reconcile with the claims of ordinary morality and religion.

All this is, in fact, too intellectual, too metaphysical, to be of great value for religious ends. Mysticism is in most danger when it is most intellectual, when it turns its back upon the needs and claims of the heart. It is true of much in the Upaniṣads that it is seeking to discover the relations of man with the universe rather than his relation with God. An intellectual unity seems to be the most all-inclusive that man can imagine, and an intellectually conceived being to be the one least partaking of the temporal and so nearest to the nature of that which is above time and thought and being itself. To Indian mystics especially it seems that it is only, as Boehme, a speculative mystic of the West, puts it, 'by stopping the wheel of the imagination and the senses' that He, of whom all that can be said is, 'Neti, neti,' 'He is not, He is not,' can be reached and known. All this belongs, therefore, more to metaphysics than to religion. But in the broad lines of its aspiration—its craving for an ultimate unity, a craving often filled with deep emotion, its discontent with the finite, its conviction that what is deepest within is most akin to what is highest above, its affinity with mysticism is unquestionable. The 'four marks', indeed, which William James has propounded as distinctive of the mystic state and which are certainly applicable to many phases of mysticism, viz. ineffability, noetic quality, transiency and passivity, are to be found here and demonstrate the kinship of the philosophy or religion of the Upaniṣads with mystic religion.

When we turn to the devotional mysticism of India,

which is comprised in the general term of *bhakti*, we are in a sphere which, while thoroughly Indian in its characteristics, is much closer to the common religious heart of the world, and indeed furnishes some of its most intense and passionate examples. Its saints feel, as the mystic thinkers do, the passion for final oneness, but they feel still more the passion for fellowship with God. It is the strength and the conflict of these two desires that gives a 'troubled intensity' to their utterances. In the Christian and Hebrew saints the poignancy of their lyrical cries for God comes from the frustration of their desire that their sense of sin creates. There is not that sense of sin in the Indian saint, and yet for him, too, a deep restlessness lies around his rest. There is struggle and despair and a division of desire for the Indian saint as for the saint of the West. It is not, however, that 'when I would do good, evil is present with me'; it is a conflict between the desire of the One and of the two. The Indian saint has to make a difficult choice between deliverance from 'the pang of separation' and possession of the blessed consciousness of love satisfied. From this soul-struggle come some of the most touching and beautiful lyrical utterances of the Indian poets of *bhakti*.

While the mysticism of the Upaniṣads was sometimes too cold, that which we find here is sometimes warm with a too earthly passion. This is especially so when it centres round the name of Krishṇa and is stimulated by the gross suggestions that his story supplies. In the case of the other figure to whom especially this worship is rendered, namely Rāma, this is much less frequently a fault, and that is so also where Viṭhobā (though Viṭhobā is identified with Krishṇa) is the god that is loved and adored. The prevailing method of mysticism is love,

and in the whole *bhakti* movement this is the accepted means by which the worshipper and the object of his worship are brought together. For the worship of these gods, who are viewed as gracious and friendly, there seems no reason why renunciation should be required, and yet here also the fact that behind them the shadowy Brahman still looms divides the worshipper's mind between joy in the world and in the experiences of common life and rejection of them as unreal. Kabīr's poems give many examples of this vacillation. His instinct, and that of most of the *bhaktas*, turns away with dislike from the Yogī and the ascetic, those murderers of the joy of life. 'The Yogī dyes his garments', he says, 'instead of dyeing his mind in the colours of life.' Again, 'The home is the abiding place; in the home is reality; the home helps to attain him who is real.' And yet, on the other hand, he says, 'Do not go to the garden of flowers! O friend, go not there; in your body is the garden of flowers.' What we see about us in the world is 'the sport of the Unattainable One': the shadow of unreality falls across the joy of life. But on the whole for Kabīr and Tukārām and most of this school the mood of acceptance of the world and its gifts predominates. Both these poets in closely similar language remind themselves that God cares for and sustains them.

Unwearied He bears up the universe.
  How light a burden I!
Does not His care the frog within the stone
  With food supply?

The bird, the creeping thing, lays up no store.
  This Great One knows their need!
And if I, Tukā, cast on Him my load,
  Will not His mercy heed? [1]

[1] Macnicol, *Psalms of Marāthā Saints* (Heritage of India Series), p 74.

For the most part they would both agree with Dr. Rabindranath Tagore when he says, 'Deliverance is not for me in renunciation. I will never shut the doors of my senses.' And yet, on the other hand, Kabīr says, 'The gate is locked, but within there is fragrance'; and Tukārām:

> Lo, in the empty world apart
> I hearken, waiting Thy footfall.[1]

Even on such human and tender hearts as Tukārām's and Kabīr's lies the spell of Brahman and the *via negativa*, so that they too would set forth on 'a flight of the lonely soul to the lonely God'.

Yet the desire for a fellowship of affection is inextinguishable in the hearts of these seekers. God is the 'mother's house', that place of rest and love, to which the married girl looks back with so much longing from her husband's house, this world of sorrow.

> As the bride looks back to her mother's house
> And goes, but with dragging feet,
> So my soul looks up unto Thee and longs
> That Thou and I may meet.
>
> As a child cries out and is sore distressed
> When its mother it cannot see,
> As a fish that is taken from out the wave,
> So 'tis, says Tukā, with me.[2]

In how many pictures they present this inextinguishable desire for 'God Who is their home'!

> How the lotus all the night
> Dreameth, dreameth of the light!
>
> As the stream to fishes, Thou—
> As is to the calf the cow.

[1] Macnicol, *loc. cit.*, p. 60.

[2] Ibid., p. 56.

To the faithful wife how dear
Tidings of her lord to hear!

How a miser's heart is set
On the wealth he hopes to get!

Such, says Tukā, such am I,
But for Thee I'd surely die.[1]

This is, says Kabīr,

the music of the meeting of soul with soul:
It is the music of the forgetting of sorrows:
It is the music that transcends all coming in and all going forth.

That is the stuff out of which true mysticism, east or west, is woven.

Again, as a means to that communion, 'self-naughting' is as fully recognized as necessary by these saints as it was by the author of the *Theologia Germanica* or St. Catherine of Siena. But there is a difference between the Eastern and the Western mystic in the content of the self, the 'I'. In India, as we would expect from all the history of its thought, this *ego* is somewhat thin and metaphysical, not the sin-burdened 'I' that it is to Christian thought. And yet one can hardly doubt that on the lips of Kabīr and Tukārām it is not merely personality that the saint feels is coming between him and God but a rebel selfhood. It is not easy to judge of the moral value of their longing for freedom from these bonds: here again the *Karma*-transmigration doctrine has an influence making their thought different from that of the Christian and certainly of less ethical value. But that we have here a more truly religious aspiration than in the case of the 'Thou art That' of Upaniṣad metaphysics, there can be no doubt.

[1] Macnicol, *Psalms of Marāthā Saints*, p. 58.

The unstruck drum of Eternity is sounded within me; but my deaf ears cannot hear it.
So long as man clamours for the *I* and the *mine*, his works are as naught:
When all love of the *I* and *Mine* is dead, then the work of the Lord is done.

Here 'love of the I' and the reference to its 'clamours' betray a real feeling of alienation from a God who requires obedience, a feeling that is of the same stuff as the Christian's sense of sin. So it is also in many of the songs of Tukārām.

My self I've rendered up to Thee;
I've cast it from me utterly.

Now here before Thee, Lord, I stand,
Attentive to Thy least command.

The self within me now is dead,
And Thou enthronèd in its stead.

Yea, this, I, Tukā, testify.
No longer here is 'me' or 'my'.[1]

That certainly seems to describe an attitude of humility and self-surrender, and

Still to the lowly soul
He doth Himself impart,
And for His dwelling and His throne
Chooseth the pure in heart.

The mystic symbol of the bridegroom and the bride is as commonly employed by these saints as it was by Ruysbroek or Samuel Rutherford, but here it has not often passed through a flame of holiness that has cleansed it and that can keep it clean. When Krishṇa is the 'sole male' and 'all besides are females', there is manifestly a danger lest gross and sensual suggestions shall

[1] Macnicol, *loc. cit.*, p. 79.

usurp the place of true devotion. Tukārām far more frequently uses the symbol of the mother and her child than this more dangerous one, and when he does use it he often does not appear to be thinking of Krishṇa as the lover of the milkmaids. Viṭhobā, whom he worships, is usually for him the husband of Rukminī, not the lover of Rādha. It is surely a devout heart that sits waiting and longing for the god of his affection and cries—

> Says Tukā, Blest shall be the day—
> Ah, soon may it betide!—
> When One shall come from Pandhari
> To summon me, His bride.[1]

The quietism of mystic thought betrays itself in these saints, though it does not cause such a paralysis of effort as in the case of those who seek to lose themselves in the ineffable and actionless Brahman. The Indian sages have certainly not been among the 'great actives' of mysticism. But as with the mystics of the West so with the mystic temper of India, its safeguard against the temptation of a slothful self-absorption will be found when it possesses at the heart of its devotional fervour the figure of the Lord Jesus Christ. For it is by its deep desire for divine communion that Indian religious thought will surely make one of its most precious contributions to the interpretation of Christ. It has already begun to make it in the person of the Christian poet, N. V. Tilak, one of the foremost among India's poets of this generation. Fellowship with God is a subject of which he sings with much beauty and variety of language in hymns that are sung throughout the whole Marathi Christian Church.[2]

[1] Ibid., p. 59.
[2] For a further account of this poet see p. 206 below, and J. C. Winslow's *Narayan Vaman Tilak* (Builders of India Series).

As the moon and its beams are one, so, that I be one with Thee,
This is my prayer to Thee, O God; this is this beggar's plea.

It will be a great and precious gift if the Indian Church is able in days to come to teach us how to enter more fully into the secret of the presence of God. Then quietism will pass into a strength for service that is not shallow or fussy, and the passivity of the ancient *rishis* will be transformed by the faith and the love of Christ into a 'wise passiveness'.

[*Note.*—The translations from Kabīr in this article are from Dr. Rabindranath Tagore's *Hundred Poems of Kabīr.*]

---

## VIII. HINDU DEVOTION

IT is no new thing to realize the essentially mystical character of very much that is best in Hinduism. But the fact has been presented afresh with peculiar persuasiveness in several books recently published. Of these the most notable have been, of course, the works of Rabindranath Tagore, so pervaded by the delicate charm of the mystic thought of India, so suggestive of its subtlety and tenderness. But lest we should think that we have here only an ornament of life, and not also a source of strength and sanctity, there has come the autobiography of the poet's father, the Maharshi, disclosing the mystical character of his piety. The republication of this book with an introduction by Miss Underhill, the leading interpreter of western mysticism, and, more recently, the appearance

of a translation under the joint auspices of Rabindranath Tagore and Miss Underhill of a selection from the poems of Kabīr, have emphasized the kinship of this type of thought in East and West and the preciousness of much that is the common experience and confession of all devout men for whom, whatever the religion they profess, there have been unsealed the hidden fountains. Nothing but great gain can come to the cause of religion and of the coming kingdom of God by these disclosures, showing as they do, often with a wonderful poignancy and beauty, that, if we dig deep enough, 'the root in every man is Christ'. As we see the winds of His Spirit lifting into storm or calming into peace the hearts alike of ancient Indian seekers and of their sons and successors to-day, we receive a new assurance that God can find Himself abundantly in such hearts when once they awake to the great discovery of Him in Christ Jesus. At the same time we see in Indian mysticism the perils that beset the Indian soul in this high quest, the temptations before which it is too apt to fall. The mystic way is a path, as the Indian sage might say, 'narrow as a razor's edge', beset with pitfalls, and the mystic vices of the West are not always the same as those which have in the past betrayed the Indian seeker. While Indian mysticism, then, may still form a bridge to bear men's souls to God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, there is that also in it, we shall find, that forms a barrier between Him and them, and of which, if it is He to whose feet they would come, the Indian mystic must beware.

Mysticism in its simplest definition is the endeavour which sets before itself as its goal direct, unmediated union of the soul with God. It is thus religion in its most intense and vital form. It is found everywhere and may

break through the crust of the most formal and superstitious worship if only the soul awakes and stirs. But while that is so, there are certain psychological climates in which more than in others it appears to be present and to flourish, growing often with a morbid growth. Such a climate India certainly seems to provide for this mood of mind. Its prevailing monism, on the one hand, and the superstitious belief, on the other, in the power of magic spells have helped to encourage in India, as nowhere else, the quietism and self-hypnotization that are peculiar perils of the mystic. But apart from these exaggerations, against which the theist scarcely need be warned, the fact that for India always God has been recognized far more fully as immanent than as transcendent at once betrays the secret of this widespread mysticism and of much of its peculiar beauty, while at the same time it suggests a lack that we may find in it. For the Indian sages God so fills the universe—they are so vividly aware of Him in all things near or far ('thou art the dark-blue bee, thou art the green parrot with red eyes, thou art the thunder-cloud, the seasons, the seas') —that union with Him becomes easy, and the danger may be that it appears to them too easy. One is not conscious in their books of the obstacles in the way, or at least of some very formidable ones, as one is in the Old Testament. It is wholly untrue, of course, to hold, as has been held, that there was no mysticism in the religion of Israel. The Hebrew prophets certainly saw God face to face and knew Him by an immediate intuition. But union with a God realized primarily as transcendent is not easily attained. When God's immanence is the chief thought before the seeker it is in nature rather than in the moral world, or, if in the moral world, then rather in

the relationships of natural piety that He is sought and discerned, and there is a grace, a beauty in the vision, such as shines from every page of Rabindranath Tagore's poems, as of those of many an earlier poet-saint. The transcendent God, discovered in the earthquake and the storm and in the tempests of the soul, is One with whom fellowship is far more difficult to compass. In the experience of the saints to whom He is chiefly presented in this aspect there is, more than in the case of others, strain, effort, spiritual agony. There is less mysticism, but it is deeper. The attainment of his goal by the Indian saint is easier, his experience, it may be, shallower, but it is often more gracious, more beautiful.

There are in India, as elsewhere, both speculative and devotional mystics; that is, there are those whom the interpretation of the universe primarily occupies, and there are those whom, to the exclusion of almost all else, the needs of the heart absorb. The third category into which they have been sometimes divided, that of nature mystics, is hardly separable in India from the former two. There both the speculative and devotional mystics find spirit present and overflowing in every form of natural life. The premisses of their thought ensure that this is so, for in God, in the words of Kabīr—who is echoing a verse of the Gītā—'the worlds are being told like beads'. But the danger here, a danger manifest on many a page of ancient Indian speculation, is that the spirit so discerned in nature is not given all its sovereign rights. The higher is assimilated to the lower. India is full of pantheism, and the Indian mind is deeply infected with its consequent obliteration of distinctions that are vital to the moral life and to personal religion. The doer and the Causer to do, they say, are one. This view is deeply characteristic of

India and fatally infects its religious life, poisoning the springs of true devotion. It is not, however, with this speculative mysticism that we would here concern ourselves, but with those who by the vision of a sincere heart see God, and who hear His voice in all the world about them. These are the devotional mystics who make use of nature and of the experiences of common life with perfect freedom and naturalness as allies of their thoughts of God and of their desire to find Him. They are not like Boehme, who needed a revelation before plants 'turned with loosened tongue to talk with him'. Not so much the more majestic and awful aspects of the world—which testify rather to the divine transcendence—but the flowers and birds and all the homely incidents of life speak to them of God and of the soul. Every page of the *Gitānjali* and of the translations from Kabīr testifies to this, and those who are acquainted with works of other poet-saints which have not been translated could adduce from them a hundred parallels. The cow with her calf, the ferryman bearing the traveller in his coracle across the stream, the beggar at the door, the moon-bird Chakor that is supposed to feed upon the moonbeams, the rain-bird wailing for the rain, 'the swan taking its flight to the lake beyond the mountains'—such simple emblems as these are used continually to bear testimony to the compassionate heart of God and to the hungry heart of man.

This use of nature is closely similar to that which our Lord habitually makes of it in His parables and His discourses. There is a real kinship between His outlook on the world and theirs. In spite of their *māya* doctrine, this is for many of these simple-hearted seekers, as it was for Christ, God's world, where His heart is manifest.

Ah, wherefore fast or wherefore go
  To solitude apart?
Whether thou joy or sorrow know,
  Have God within thy heart.

If in his mother's arms he be
  The child knows naught amiss.
Cast out, yea cast out utterly
  All other thought than this.

Love not the world nor yet forsake
  Its gifts in fear and hate.
Thy life to God an offering make
  And to Him dedicate.[1]

That is the cry of a Marāthā poet of the seventeenth century. Some verses from an earlier Marāthā poet, who lived in the thirteenth century, will illustrate their wealth in symbol and in allegory, so prodigal that it sometimes almost appears to confound the worlds of the seen and the unseen. This poet is describing those whom he calls the 'great-souled', that is those who by devotion have attained to fellowship with God.

They bathe in Wisdom; then their hunger stay
With Perfectness; lo, all in green array
The leaves of Peace are they.

Buds of Attainment these; columns they are
In Valour's hall; of Joy fetched from afar
Each a full water-jar.

With pearls of Peace their limbs they beautify;
Within their minds, as in a scabbard, I,
The All-indweller, lie.

Therefore their love waxes unceasingly—
These great-souled ones; not the least rift can be
Betwixt their hearts and me.

This use of symbolism is essentially mystical and re-

[1] Macnicol, *Psalms of Marāthā Saints*, p. 84.

veals the intense preoccupation of those poets with the interests of the soul. The common sights and scenes about them are elements of the spiritual world through which they touch and know it.

It is a characteristic of the mystical spirit at its best that it combines this intimacy with the life of nature, this keen apprehension of its secret with a denial of the world and a sense of being a stranger in it. To maintain an equilibrium between these two points of view has always been the difficult task of the saint. St. Francis accomplished it to an unusual degree, and it would seem that in their sympathy with all the forms of life about them many of the Indian seekers were closely akin to him, though they had not his passionate spirit of self-sacrifice. As he loved his little sisters the birds, so did Tukārām, the Marāthā poet, so that when set to drive them from the cornfields he had not the heart to rob them of the food they needed no less than he. One of the great mystic symbols of the West is that of life as a pilgrimage, a toilsome quest for God. This idea is not so often—as far at least as one student's acquaintance with Indian devotional writers goes—described by them under that as under other and no less impressive figures. Though the pilgrim to a distant shrine, dusty and travel-worn, is familiar in every Indian landscape, yet this conception, constantly recurrent as it is in the popular religious literature, is more frequently presented under other images. One of those that is made use of by Tukārām has in its Indian context peculiar pathos and significance. He compares himself to a child-bride leaving her mother's house for that of her mother-in-law. It is difficult to convey even through a free translation more than a very little of what the lines suggest to an Indian reader.

As the bride looks back to her mother's house
  And goes, but with dragging feet,
So my soul looks up unto Thee and longs
  That Thou and I may meet.

As a child cries out and is sore distressed
  When its mother it cannot see,
As a fish that is taken from out the wave,
  So 'tis, says Tukā, with me.[1]

The figures of a child that has lost its mother and of a fish taken from the water are frequently employed and are deeply significant of the sense that this poet and others like him had of man's need and desire for God. But the poignancy of the picture that the first verse presents is something that it is impossible for any one but an Indian fully to appreciate. There is a world of pathos in the figure it calls up of the little Indian girl leaving her 'mother's house'—a word rich with all the significance of our word 'home'—and leaving it for the strange and loveless atmosphere of the house of her mother-in-law and her husband. The home-sickness of the child as she looks back is for Tukārām a symbol of the longing of his heart for 'Keshava'—for 'God who is his home'.

The longing for God and the satisfaction that is found in His fellowship are described by a rich variety of symbols. One of the most frequent, in Tukārām at least, is that of the babe at his mother's breast. Tulsī Dās, Kabīr, Nāmdev and he all compare the soul finding its true element in God to the fish that cannot live and breathe but in the sea. But perhaps the symbol that more than any other takes the place in Indian mysticism that is taken in the mysticism of the West by the pilgrimage of the soul is that of the crossing of a river in a boat. By the Marāthā saints and by Kabīr, in the

[1] Macnicol *loc. cit.*, p. 56.

meditations of Maharshi Debendranath Tagore and in the poems of his son, this picture is again and again made use of to represent man's perilous passage to what is sometimes God's bosom and sometimes a land unknown, but what is perhaps to most both of these at once. It is strange that to the West death is the dark river to be crossed, but to India it is not death but life. 'Your Friend', says Kabīr, 'stands on the other shore.' Taking a wise *guru* for his ferryman, and embarking on the boat of a surrendered spirit, the traveller crosses the perilous waters safely to the place of union and of bliss. A simpler picture is the following:

> Launch upon the sea of life,
>   Fear not aught that thou mayst meet.
> Stout the ship of Pandurang;
>   Not a wave shall wet thy feet.
>
> Many saints await thee there,
>   Standing on the farther shore.
> Haste, says Tukā, haste away;
>   Follow those who've gone before.[1]

Certainly men before whose eyes such pictures as these were continually rising have minds deeply dyed of mysticism. They belong to the company of visionaries for whom the things unseen and afar are the most near and real of all things. It is true that it is a differentia of all their thought that the world that is denied is not so much a world of evil, though that conception is by no means absent, as a world of bondage. The deliverance that they seek is not, however, in the case of those men of devotion, absorption in an abyss of nothingness. They recognize that that is, perhaps, the supreme goal, and they pay respectful tribute to the high intellectual path of knowledge which leads there, and to those who

[1] Macnicol, *loc. cit.*, p. 75.

travel by that path. But it is not for them. They deliberately turn away from it to find in fellowship with God what their hearts desire. Their conclusion may not be logical, but mysticism is not logical. 'So dear to them is the path of *bhakti*', says one of them, 'that they reckon as of no account the final liberation.' *Bhakti* is the method of approach to God by love and trust, and compared with it knowledge, Tukārām declares, is 'a stringless lute'. It is ever the argument of love that they pursue, and they pursue it with a boldness that is characteristic of all mystics. They are sure not only of their own hunger for God but of God's for them, and sometimes echo even the claim of Eckhart that 'God can as little do without us as we without Him'. 'He calls himself his worshippers' debtor,' says Tukārām; 'he is ever grateful to them.' Krishṇa is represented by another poet as thinking thus of his devotee: 'If all sense of separation and of selfhood were to vanish from him, and he were to realize "I am He", then what would I do, left all alone?'

There are few of the characteristic marks of the mysticism of the West that are not reproduced in greater or less measure in the devout experience of these Indian saints. 'Self-naughting' is recognized by them to be necessary for approach to God just as it was by so many of the mystics of the West. 'When all love of the I and the mine is dead,' says Kabīr, 'then the work of the Lord is done.' It would be surprising indeed if, in an ardour for God so passionate and so human as this Indian mysticism displays, the imagery of the bridegroom and the bride, so often made use of by the devout feeling of Christian saints, were not found here also. It is, as a matter of fact, so prominent in some of the Indian *bhakti* sects as

to form practically their sole symbol of the relation of the soul to God. This appears presently to have consequences which are in most cases fatal to the spirituality of the worship, turning it to grossness. If the figure of Christ could not always exorcize that evil spirit from Christian mysticism in some of its degenerate forms, is it strange that that of Krishṇa on the contrary should have often called it up? These types of Indian mystical devotion may be passed by here as morbid growths inevitably appearing in religious contexts with no ideal figure at their centre such as Christ. But in the religious life of such saints as Kabīr and Tukārām these gross suggestions have little or no place. We have seen that for Tukārām the symbol that most draws his heart is that of the mother with her babe. A few of his *abhangs* indeed describe the devout worshipper under the image of a woman addressing her paramour, but these are so few that they may be ignored. This, however, one cannot fail to note, that in all the Indian symbolism that represents even in the most touching and beautiful forms the relations of the divine and human lovers it is the fervour, the generosity, the compassion, the trust of that love on the one side or the other that are present to the thought of the saint. It is seldom the case, as it is so often in Christian symbol, and as it is especially in this symbol of the bridegroom and the bride, that their purity and faithfulness are also emphasized. When the Bible metaphor makes use of the picture of a lawless love such as that of the Rādhā of the Krishṇa story it is to describe the nation that has forsaken God and rebelled against Him. In their use of the symbol of the bridegroom and the bride the Christian saints suggest a true marriage relationship and no lawless

love—'no dubious spiritualizing of earthly ecstasies, but a lifelong bond that shall never be lost or broken'.[1]

It is a thankless task to point out the limitations and defects of a spirit of devotion so sincere and so intense. No other country surely presents such a drama of desire as does the religious history of India. Its saints stand upon the bank of the river of life with an inextinguishing longing in their eyes, 'tendentesque manus ripæ ulterioris amore.' We see in them men seeking not God's gifts but God himself. 'The seekers', said Cromwell, 'are the next best sect to the finders.' But dare we say that these are not 'finders'? 'I have tasted sweetness at his feet,' says Tukārām. He claims to have found a peace such that 'the threefold fever has passed utterly away'. The question rather is, did that peace send him back strong to bear and suffer among men and for men? Quietism, the tranquillity that is forgetfulness of duty and of the claims of love, has ever been the chief peril that attends the mystic spirit, and nowhere more closely than in India. It is probable that Tukārām the shop-keeper and Kabīr the weaver escaped it more than most. They did not flee the world but found God's presence in the homely incidents of daily life. It does not appear that what Kabīr calls 'the music of the forgetting of sorrows' lulled them to a slothful self-absorption. But on the other hand it manifestly did not fill them with the 'strength to be sacrificed and save'. Nothing testifies with such finality to this lack in Hindu mysticism even at its highest as does the fact that there is in it no impulse to intercession for men. The prayers of the saints are for their own needs. The Bodhisattvas of later Buddhism are ready to forgo Nirvāna in the ardour of

[1] Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism*, p. 512

their compassion, so that they may save creatures. But these Hindu saints, while they are willing to renounce the empty prize of liberation, do not dream of doing so for the sake of sinning, suffering men.

> Lo, in the empty world apart
> I hearken, waiting Thy footfall.

When Tukārām says this he betrays that to him it appears that he is nearest to the God he seeks when the world is emptiest about him. In the last analysis even for such human and tender hearts as Tukārām and Kabīr devout experience is 'a flight of the lonely soul to the lonely God'.

At the same time the faith of these saints is without question the very salt of Indian religion. To them and to their experience devout spirits still turn to feed their souls. It would indeed be a mistake to deny the real religious value of much in the meditations of the ancient Upaniṣads. Along with much that appears to us arid speculation, there is present in these writings a sense of the all-enveloping One which, as the devout Indian broods upon them, seems to enfold his troubled heart, bringing it peace. This need not be an opiate but a calming and restoring experience. 'Self-submergence', as P. C. Mozoomdar affirms, should not conflict with 'devout self-remembrance'. But for a more various comfort the devout men of to-day turn to those human voices that speak the people's language and express the plain heart's needs. To reformers such as the late M. G. Ranade and Sir R. G. Bhandarkar, Tukārām has been a fountain of daily spiritual refreshment. His *abhangs* also provide a large portion of the hymn-book of the Prārthana Samāj. There is no reason why his limitations should bind those who make this use of his experience any more than do those of the Psalmists in the case of the Christian

worshipper. If he was an idolater and had little sense of his responsibility for others, these things need not be true of those who to-day are helped by his example to seek like him the feet of God. Intercession is beginning to have place in the worship of the modern Indian theist, and the ancient mysticism may help to make him one in whom, while the passion of his desire is no longer self-centred, it is at the same time 'too full for sound and foam'.

Certainly the Indian saints, if we exclude Buddha, have not been among the 'great actives' of mysticism. We see also that only a few of them successfully avoided on the one hand the peril of losing themselves in the 'divine darkness' of absorption, and on the other that of finding themselves in the company of a gross and sensual deity. Indian devotional mysticism has had to steer a safe way between these two dangers that threaten it, Krishṇaism and Brahmaism. But the strength of these temptations that beset it reveals to us all the more clearly the depth and intensity of the longing for divine fellowship that has overcome them. And as with the mystics of the West, so with the mystic temper of India, its safeguard against these temptations will be found when it possesses at the heart of its devotional fervour the figure of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is surely not a law of mysticism, as the Ritschlians assert, that 'its yearning after God himself cannot endure the historical'. The devotion of these Indian saints longs for concrete supports of their faith in God. Their instinct selects whatever is least unworthy in the legends of the gods. Even Kabīr, who has turned from Purāna and Koran in disgust, remembers gladly that 'Dhruva, Prahlad and Shukadeva' drank of the waters that he is seeking and had their thirst satisfied. They turn from their speculations and their dreams to accept joyfully the confirmation of their hopes in

God that His presence in the life of nature seems to bring. Therefore surely they should not find in Christ anything other than the crown of their desires. They will find in Him at the same time their safeguard against the perils of the mystic spirit and especially of the mystic spirit of India. This we may confidently affirm since 'many of the great contemplatives of the West have found that deliberate meditation upon the humanity of Christ was a necessity if they were to retain a healthy and well-balanced inner life'.[1]

It may be asked how far those characteristics which we have found in the older saints and which are reproduced in the best representatives of the Samāj movement, in Debendranath Tagore and P. C. Mozoomdar, in M. G. Ranade and Sir R. G. Bhandarkar, are revealing themselves also in the Indian Christian Church. As regards the Church in the Marāthi area there is one indication at least that this mystic spirit is finding in Christ its home, its 'mother's house'. Mr. N. V. Tilak[2] is not only a leader in the Christian church but a poet of the true stock of Tukārām and Kabīr. He has the same love for the things of nature and of daily experience round about him that they had and the same insight into their inner significance. And he has the same desire also for fellowship with God. The hymn-book of the Christian church has been enriched by him in many directions, but in none more remarkably than in those hymns that treat of life in Christ and communion with God. The Christian community as they use these hymns enter by their means into an inheritance that is theirs by right of birth, but an inheritance that has been infinitely enriched by its consecration in Christ Jesus. Surely much may be hoped in the future from such a soil with such an enrichment.

[1] Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism*, p. 144.

[2] See p. 99 above and p. 206 below.

# IX. TRANSMIGRATION AND *KARMA* AND THEIR INFLUENCE IN LIVING HINDUISM.

THE most powerful elements in Hinduism are, in the region of ideas, its pantheism or monism, in the region of conduct and religion, its doctrines of transmigration and *karma*, and, in its social relationships, the system of caste. I propose to consider the one of these that perhaps is most profound and far-reaching in its influence upon the character and life of the people, and has been so throughout many centuries—the belief in transmigration and *karma*. As I have said elsewhere, 'the whole Indian development is so dominated by it that Hinduism is in many respects simply an adjunct of this view of life and its destiny'.[1] To illustrate its place in the variety of Hindu beliefs I have made use of a comparison employed by Professor William James in another connexion. The *karma*-transmigration doctrine lies in the midst of the efforts of the Hindu soul to formulate a theory of the universe 'like a corridor in a hotel. Innumerable chambers open out of it. In one you may find a man writing an atheistic volume; in the next some one on his knees praying for faith and strength.' In another 'a system of idealistic metaphysics is being excogitated.... They all own the corridor and all must pass through it if they want a practicable way of getting into one of their respective rooms.' It is desirable accordingly, if we are to understand the Hindu type of mentality, that we should have a clear understanding of this doctrine and of its influence on the lives of

[1] Macnicol, *Indian Theism*, p. 240.

men in India to-day. It inevitably affects profoundly their whole outlook, and we cannot understand the faith of the devout theist on his knees in prayer or the efforts of the social reformer or the pride of the Brāhman and the submission of the outcaste unless we take into account this background of all their belief and practice.

The twofold conception of *karma* and transmigration does not appear to be an inheritance from early Vedic times. There is no trace of it in the Vedic Hymns. It is in the Upaniṣads that we find it first referred to. There it is definitely stated that 'as a man acts, as he conducts himself, so will he be born'. It is probable that the primitive idea of the continuance of human existence in animals and trees was adopted by the Aryan invaders from the aborigines of the land, and that their thinkers, applying their subtle minds to it, built up on this foundation the theory of a continuous chain of existences bound together by a law of retribution. They may have laid hold of these ideas—it has been suggested—at the same stage in their thought as is represented in the history of Hebrew religion by the book of Job. The old naïve belief in material recompense in this life for good and evil conduct having proved untenable, they built up this theory as a means of solving the problem. Applying it not only to the present but to the past, they drew the conclusion that a man's life now is one of a series of lives that have had no beginning and look forward to no end. There are certain points in regard to this doctrine that must be made clear. In the first place we must realize that good deeds do not any more than evil set a man free from the wheel to which his life is bound.[1] They may have the effect of causing him to be re-born as a

[1] Cf. James iii. 6 : τὸν τροχὸν τῆς γενέσεως, the wheel of birth.

Brāhman or even as a god, but still the wheel revolves and he is still enslaved to living. Again, everything that happens or shall happen is inevitable. 'How shall there be in this *saṃsāra* (transmigratory process) any uncaused action?' Every moment of man's life is the direct result of some act (*karma*) that he has done: his life is an endless chain of close-linked deeds, all made of the same stuff and all, whether good or evil, it would seem, unbreakable. 'As among a thousand cows', says the Mahābhārata, 'a calf will find its mother, so the deed previously done will find and follow its doer.' Further, as experience of life goes on and as reflection is applied to such a doctrine and its consequences, the whole of life becomes inevitably infected with the profoundest pessimism. Such a bondage must breed despair and the desire, deeper than all else, to find some gateway of escape. But whence can escape come? The reward of heaven is hated no less than the punishment of hell. This is a universal and quite unmoral law. The working out of *karma* is always producing new *karma* to be worked out further and, in the words of Deussen, the clock of retribution in the very act of running down winds itself up again. Such a thought 'hangs like a pall' over all Indian thought and life. It may seem to furnish some explanation of the sorrows and inequalities of life. It certainly offers no mitigation of them and no impulse to the endeavour to relieve them.

We can see, I think, from that account of the theory that it would necessarily resolve itself into a doctrine of fatalism. *Karma*, which simply means 'deed', is something done in the unknown past, in 'the backward and abysm of time', something that cannot be altered now, and whose consequences can only be endured. Hence

the word in common usage comes to mean 'fate, destiny'. A synonym for it is the 'unseen' (*adriṣṭa*), the dark, mysterious shadow that sits and waits for man. What a man is now and does now is something written on his forehead, inescapable. What fate has written on the forehead, says Tulsi Dās, neither man nor God nor demon is able to efface. For the gods too, as I have said, are subject to this law—unless it be that the mysterious Supreme Spirit, who is without parts and passions, is beyond its reach. To be re-born in heaven is only to tarry for a while in a place of bliss, from which presently one may fall to earthly or to bestial or even lower forms of life and suffering. Life thus is, as one writer has said, 'the wage of sin', and the supreme question for the Indian sage is how an escape can be discovered from its agony. In popular language 'to cut short the eighty-four', that is, the eighty-four lakhs of births to which they look forward, is the final and supreme attainment, if indeed it can be attained.

The way of deliverance (*mokṣa*) which the seers have discovered for themselves and reveal is one which cuts the knot of the whole process by declaring it to be unreal —illusion. The ultimate cause of this bondage is affirmed to be ignorance (*avidyā*), which is due to the deceitfulness of the world of illusion in which we dwell. Hence comes 'desire', 'thirst', resulting in action, and the fetter closes upon the soul. Thus the way of deliverance is for a man to perceive his freedom by realizing that all is unreality save the Absolute Self. Knowing himself to be one with that Real he rises above illusion, above bondage and re-birth, and all the lower life of action into the sphere of changeless thought. He becomes Brahman: he wins deliverance: he is not again re-born.

These things seem to most of us, no doubt, as we read them set forth in a text-book or as we try to follow them in the curious, remote discussions of the Indian sacred books, very far apart from life and its problems, and, perhaps we may think, of little relevance to the actual concerns and interest of men and women in India to-day. Let us try to see how they work in the actual life of the people and what consequences they have on conduct and character. The question may be asked, to begin with, Is this doctrine actually believed by the great body of the Indian people? Do they accept it as their lot that they shall be born and re-born, and that they are held in the grip of this law by the acts and desires of each day? There is some conflict in the testimony of students of Indian life and thought in this matter. Sir George Grierson, who has an intimate acquaintance with the people of upper India, affirms that multitudes among them look forward at the end of life to passing, just as a Christian might, into the presence of God. I find too that in Mr. Holland's *Goal of India* a 'leading Hindu authority' is quoted as avowing it as his opinion 'that transmigration is an academic belief which a Hindu thinks of as applying to other peoples' relatives but never to his own. These, his own relations, he always believes to be in heaven' (p. 82). I can only urge, on the other hand, my own experience. The weight of this belief may lie less heavily upon some parts of India than upon others. In Western India I can testify that among the simplest people of the villages I have found it everywhere accepted. It is true that it is not, I believe, vividly realized by them. I do not believe for a moment that a reason for their vegetarianism (in the case of the vegetarian castes) is that a man fears lest he might be eating

his grandmother. The doctrine is not concretely realized by them as implying that they may presently themselves occupy the bodies of plants or animals or that plants and animals about them are exiled souls of men. Its effect upon them is rather negative and paralysing to all thought of the future or concern with it. They say of the dead, simply, 'He is gone'. Their imagination does not pursue him farther. But the effect is that no hope of immortality illuminates the future, and still more the past weighs as a heavy and inexorable burden on their lives to-day. This belief lies upon their wills heavy as frost, stilling complaint, indeed, but destroying initiative and effort. It robs the future of the colours of hope, as well no doubt as, to a large extent, of fear: it leaves it merely drab. And it empties the present likewise of all energy and power of amendment. It is true to say, I think, that over wide areas at least this belief is a commonplace in the background of men's thoughts, and that it has done more than any other doctrine in the land to enervate them and reduce them to lethargy and despair—morally, in a word, to bleed India white.

The practical influence of these ideas is seen on a great scale in the system of caste of which they furnish a justification and support. This system supplies an elaborately graduated scheme which can fit into such a doctrine of carefully adjusted rewards and punishments. A man's spiritual status is supposed to correspond to his rank in the order of caste: his *karma* and his social rank agree, and he should accept it as appointed for him and immutable. Thus these doctrines supply a sanction for this system and do much to buttress it in the powerfully entrenched position that it holds in India. That this belief is recognized to be no dead and negligible theory but a

malign influence in Hindu life, cutting the nerve of effort and leaving no room for worship and religion, is indicated by the fact that the most serious and sincere of the movements of religious and social reform have emphasized their rejection of it. This is so in regard to the great theistic societies of Bengal and Bombay and of their leaders, Ram Mohun Roy, Debendranath Tagore and his son Rabindranath. It is true also of the less well known Dev Samāj in North India, but it is not true of the Arya Samāj, which retains the doctrine though it attacks caste. In earlier times, too, movements of revolt against Brāhmanism and caste tyranny, such as that which resulted in the formation of the Vira-Saiva or Lingayat sect, rejected transmigration, perceiving its intimate relationship with the evils they desired to get free from. On the other hand Theosophy has accepted it as a profound truth and has laboured to reconcile it with effort for the betterment of society. A study, however, of the history of Theosophy will, I believe, show that the contradiction between its theory and its practice in this matter has resulted in moral compromises with such evils as that of caste which condemn the whole movement. To sum up the position in regard to *karma* and transmigration, I think we may hold that its influence is widespread and deep throughout the whole land, a paralysing influence from which India must be set free if she is to progress at all; that among the common people it is not clearly defined and is held along with many practices that really are in contradiction with it, but that its influence is continually present in the background of their thoughts as a bondage and an oppression; that, at the same time, enlightenment and the awakening of conscience and of a sense of responsibility for others is

weakening its hold upon the educated classes, so that while they acknowledge it in speech, they do not accept it in all its logical consequences, and, fortunately, often deny it by their acts. It is accepted as furnishing an explanation of the inequalities of life: it is accepted also in the thoroughly ethical form of the proposition that 'whatsoever a man soweth, that he shall also reap'. But the consequences from its full logical application are not deduced, and it is steadily losing its power.

The effect of the fact that all life is overshadowed by the *karma*-transmigration doctrine is, on the one hand, as we have seen, that the great majority resign themselves to despair as being bound helplessly by the chains of necessity, and, on the other, that in the case of the thoughtful and earnest few a passionate desire to escape possesses them—to escape at all costs from the agony of life. Sister Nivedita (Miss Noble) has declared that India has been possessed through all her history, more than any other race has been, by the passion for freedom. There is a measure of truth in that statement if she means, as I suppose she does, the passion to escape from this bondage to the wheel of rebirth. It was this desire that drove Gautama from his home and sent him out into the desert to wrestle with the problem of deliverance. To the Buddhist to attain, to become perfect, is 'to break the fetter of becoming'. As the sea is impregnated with one flavour, the flavour of salt, so the Buddhist law and discipline is impregnated with but one flavour, the flavour of deliverance. But, whether in Buddhism or in Hinduism, it is, of course, the few, the very few, who have the strength of soul to seek a goal that is so hard to reach. It is reached in both cases by knowledge, by deliverance from ignorance. As the nine fetters (such as the fetters

of the efficacy of works and rites, of desire for continued life and so on) are broken, and as 'the mists of ignorance roll away', there bursts on the Buddhist saint or *arahant* 'the supernal clarity of vision that reveals the lonely pinnacle on which he stands, the climax of a life to which there has been no first birth, but of which there is to be, here and now, the last end' (Mrs. Rhys Davids). This is called in Hinduism, to attain *samādhi*, the condition in which the world and its desires have no longer any control over the soul. It is delivered: it has obtained *mokṣa*. Death need not necessarily come then. The life goes on fulfilling past *karma*, just as a wheel continues to revolve till the past impulse is exhausted though no new impulse is given it. No new *karma* is being done and no necessity for further continuance in the body arises. So presently the flame dies out. The individual has passed into the silence of *Brahman*.

Thus the way to freedom is the extinction of desire: it is separation from the world and its interests. Needless to say this is a way that few choose. They have to be content to travel onward on a path that seems to them inescapable, journeying from life to life. Thus the fulfilment of the common duties of life is a source of bondage and is viewed as evil. The name for the process of endless birth and rebirth is *saṃsāra*, and it is common for a man to speak of his wife as his *saṃsāra*, that is to say, the chain that binds him to the wheel of rebirths. If he wishes deliverance he must leave her and turn his back on the duties and responsibilities of life, going out into the desert and becoming an ascetic. The knowledge that brings deliverance is gained by one who turns away from the world and lives in meditation as a *sannyāsī* or monk. All through the

history of India there have been and there still are those who leave everything to obtain this deliverance. An instance of this is described in the story of Puran Das in Kipling's *Jungle Tales*:

He has gone from the council and put on the shroud,—
(Dost thou hear? quoth Kabīr) a *bairagi* avowed.

It cannot, however, be held that this longing for deliverance has affected more than a very small minority. The whole belief has, on the other hand, contributed to produce three of the greatest hindrances in the way of India's emancipation, three of the heaviest chains that enslave her. These are her asceticism, the passive acceptance of things as they are, however evil they may be, which is so common a characteristic of the people, and the belief in an inexorable fate. It is seldom that one finds evidence of the joy of release, but Tukārām sometimes expresses it as he does also the pain of the sense of bondage. Here is one of his cries for deliverance:

'All this fearful, this weary coming and going, when will it all end?'

And here also is a cry of joy as he believes himself—either anticipating a release that he looks forward to or, perhaps, temporarily experiencing a sense of exaltation that he believes to be identification with the Supreme Spirit—as he believes himself to be set free:

Before my eyes my dead self lies;
O bliss beyond compare!
Joy fills the worlds and I rejoice,
The soul of all things there.

My selfish bonds are loosed, and now
I reach forth far and free.
Gone is the soil of birth and death—
The petty sense of 'me'.[1]

[1] Macnicol, *Psalms of Marāthā Saints*, p. 79.

His personal and individual life is merged in the life of the All. The same joy had been expressed many centuries before by Buddhist sages—men and women.[1] So one of the Buddhist sisters cries:

'O free indeed! O gloriously free
Am I in freedom from three crooked things,— . . .'
From quern, from mortar, from my crook-backed lord.
Ay, but I'm free from rebirth and from death,
And all that dragged me back is hurled away.

From all this we catch certain glimpses of the powerful forces that Hinduism has let loose in the land and that are still governing and moulding the character of the people, as they for centuries have been moulding them—that have largely created also the frame-work of their social life. The whole world is a phantasmagoria of unreality. The universe is like a dancing girl, dancing before a king and deceiving and beguiling him. Śiva is the god that especially embodies and represents this aspect of things: he is the destroyer and reproducer. 'He represents the earliest and universal impression of nature upon man, the impression of endless and pitiless change. He has charge of the incessant round of birth and death in which all nature eternally revolves.'

I am the god of the sensuous fire
That moulds all nature in forms divine;
The symbols of death and of man's desire,
The springs of change in the world are mine:
The organs of birth and the circlet of bones,
And the light loves carved on the temple stones.

. . . . . . .

Mine is the fountain and mine the force
That spurs all nature to ceaseless strife;
And my image is Death at the gates of Life.

[1] See p. 158 below.

In South India he is frequently represented as Naṭarāja, the dancing king, the Lord of Illusion. He is a pitiless and inhuman deity, with no forgiveness for the sinner—just as Nature herself is pitiless and unforgiving. All this side of Indian thought is gloomy and despairing. It is this that accounts for the pessimism, the tragic gloom that hangs over so much of the life of India.

---

## X. THE HINDU IDEAL OF A HOLY LIFE

THE main purpose of any religion is to make men good. Its value is tested by the measure in which it sets that before it as an aim and accomplishes the aim it sets before itself. Therefore there is no more central inquiry that we can make in regard to any religion than as to the ideal of a holy life that it holds up, and the means it provides for the realization of that ideal. I propose to investigate the Hindu ideal of a holy life and to see what its conception of sainthood is and of the means to its attainment.

There are at least two great streams that have combined to form the vast, slow-flowing river of Hinduism. One of these—to describe it broadly—is animism, the natural religion of ignorance and fear and ritual; the other is the religion of reflection and of the brooding, speculative spirit of the thinker. We find both those types of religion contributing elements which go to make up the Indian conception of holiness. The element which the former contributes is not characteristically Hindu: it is such as one would find in any religion—in Christianity as elsewhere. It views holiness as a ritual

product, something that results from the fulfilment of an external rite. For example, the word for 'holy' is *powitra*; but it means in Sanskrit, among other things, the sacred thread worn by the Brāhman, the badge of membership of a holy caste. The word is seldom used in modern sacred literature to describe God or the gods: it is used for the ceremonially purified man. God may be great, powerful, eternal, remote: He may even, to the theist, be loving and intensely beloved, but He is seldom called, as the Jew called Him, righteous, holy. When I once asked a villager what the word *powitra* meant he replied at once by giving as its equivalent a liquid used in ceremonies of purification. Again, in a story told to Dr. Rabindranath Tagore's boys in his Bolpur school we have an example of the connotation of the word to ordinary ritual Hinduism. The hero of the tale—like the hero of many fairy tales—passes through many dangers till he comes into the presence of a goddess who is able to fulfil his desire. But though he sees her throne in all its splendour he cannot see her: the throne is empty. He is then told that she can only be seen by one who is perfectly holy. He thereupon reviews his acts done that day, and remembers that he had taken a draught of milk that morning without first washing out his mouth. That has made him unholy. These are sufficient examples of a common misunderstanding of what holiness is, a misunderstanding that persists still among ourselves when we forget that holiness cannot inhere in a place or belong to a person because of his class or profession; that it is an attribute only of the will and character—a moral quality, a personal relation to a righteous God.

It is not that kind of misconception of what holiness is

that I propose to examine, since it is no peculiarity of Hinduism. I wish to examine the ideal that springs from the most distinctively Hindu elements in the religion, from the whole aim and attitude to life that Hinduism as a doctrine and an idea prescribes to its followers. We have always to keep in mind in discussing Hindu thought that, as a consequence of the profound and far-reaching influence over the mind of India of the belief in the endless procession of the soul's rebirths and of these as inflexibly determined by the deeds men do, that mind has been, and is still, possessed and dominated above all other desires by the desire for release. To Hindus in all periods of their religious history the primary concern is with the problem of deliverance, while the question of what God is or whether there is a God is secondary. In this respect they differ radically from at least Semitic and Christian peoples, whose whole religious history is governed and controlled by their thought of God and their dream of what He may be. One can scarcely exaggerate the depth to which this difference between the aim and end of these two types of religion reaches down. To the Hebrew prophet the whole universe and the whole of human existence lead up to the final, commanding fact of a just God, 'a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He'. In a view of life controlled by doctrines such as those of transmigration and *karma* the highest person, the goal and crown of all, is not a God who can be worshipped and who redeems—there is in reality no room for such a Being within this scheme of things;—the goal and crown of all is the emancipated soul himself. Thus the Christian ideal is positive and ethical, a righteous life; the Indian ideal is negative and unethical, escape from the bondage of existence.

Or again, to put the difference in another fashion, the shadows that fall across man's life are explained in Christianity as due to sin, as having their root in an evil will that needs to be cured. In Hinduism and Buddhism life, on the other hand, is to be interpreted in terms of sorrow. This difference has been expressed by, I think, Amiel in a well-known antithesis: 'The Christian says, Deliver us from evil: the Buddhist says, Deliver us from existence, for existence itself is sorrow.' What the Buddhist says in large measure the Hindu also says. The root of evil is desire, and the way to deliverance is by the uprooting of desire. It is the bonds of desire that bind us to life and make us its victims. If but this is uprooted, if we can get freedom from desire, then we shall be beyond sorrow, beyond the thrall of life. We shall have attained. This then is the ideal of Hinduism—not holiness, but passionlessness, not a righteous will, but a condition of soul that is beyond good and evil, that, seeing life to be a cruel dream, has risen above the desire of its prizes, or the fear of its punishment, into a region of indifference and calm.

I find, in a recent article by an English scholar in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* on Hindu Pantheism, the statement made that 'the abstract pantheism which Hindus profess is for the most part entirely without effect on daily life and conduct'. That is far too strong a statement to make. It is true that the Hindu's conscience is as real as the Jew's or the Christian's, but the Hindu speculative system has covered it with an intellectual crust which makes the appeal to conscience and to the sense of sin far less powerful in India than it was when John the Baptist and Jesus preached in Judea and Galilee. The sense of sin as a

conflict, dividing man's nature and causing struggle and distress as the dark side wins the victory—that sense is certainly not absent from Hinduism; it reveals itself in the pilgrimages to holy places and the bathings in holy rivers, in vows, and tortures of the flesh. It certainly is not wholly absent, but it would not be true to say that it is ever as powerfully present as it is in Hebrew religious experience, in the 51st Psalm, or in St. Paul, or as it is in St. Augustine or John Bunyan. Hindu saints frequently express a sense of failure, of weariness, of loneliness in separation from God, but their experience is widely different from that of the Jewish or Christian penitent. I think it is true also to say that a deep sense of their sinfulness has seldom been a power constraining Hindu seekers to submit themselves to Christ. Mr. N. V. Tilak, one of the most notable converts to Christianity in recent times in Western India, frankly admits that in his own case there was no keen sense of sin in his heart impelling him to Christ, and that he knows it to be similarly absent in the case of many others also. He was drawn to Christ in the first instance by his patriotism and his belief that only Christ could lift up his people and make them great again. Others are drawn by the beauty of the character of Christ or by the gracious story of His love. But the sense of sin and the apprehension of God's mercy in forgiveness is usually a later growth in their experience. Such a saint as Tukārām, it is true, confesses his sin and has some thoughts in regard to it that suggest the psalmists or St. Augustine. Thus in one poem he says:

I am a mass of sin,—
  Thou art all purity.
Yet thou must take me as I am,
  And bear my load for me.

Me Death has all consumed:
In Thee all power abides.
All else forsaking, at Thy feet
Thy servant, Tukā, hides.[1]

Again in another poem he echoes the very thought of a medieval saint who calls the Fall, 'beata culpa', 'blessed sin', because it became the cause of salvation and of the unveiling of the divine love. But, on the other hand, we have the ideal of dispassion set forth by this same poet in other poems—and I think it is true to say that this negative ideal, this craving for release from rebirth by desire renounced, has at least as prominent a place among the cries of his soul as the more positively ethical ideal has.

Who is he would act the true *gosavi's* part? [2]
Let him dig the root of longing from his heart.
If he dare not, in his pleasures let him stay—
Folly were it should he choose another way.
For when longing he has slain victoriously,
Only then shall he from all come forth set free.
Yea, says Tukā, does thy heart for union thirst?
Crush—be sure!—the seed of longing in thee first! [3]

Thus we return to the view that certainly one of the dominant ideals of sainthood that Hinduism sets before its followers is this of dispassion, of the cutting of the root of desire, of what a Western mystic has called 'holy indolence and nothingness'. Christ came to bring men life,—life 'more abundantly': here the aim is to still the storms of life till it passes into what is like death and silence. Christ purges the soul by the expulsive power of a new affection: Hinduism casts out all affection, making the soul a desert and calling that victory. It claims to cure the ills of life, but in curing them it seems

[1] Macnicol, *Psalms of Marāthā Saints*, p. 131.
[2] A *gosavi* is a holy devotee of a god.
[3] Macnicol, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

to the observer to do so by the drastic method of calling in the aid of death. It, in the German phrase, throws away the baby with the bath.

Let me illustrate this ideal of the holy life by some examples of the temper it seeks to create and of the attitude to life it produces.

It is not an ideal of love but of an absence of hate. So far it is good, but its good is the enemy of the best. To love is something more than not to hate. In the works of the Marāthā poets there is nothing that so often arouses their enthusiasm and that they describe with such satisfaction as an attitude of indifference to joy or sorrow, to good or evil. In some cases the ideal of being without enemies may suggest, and probably does suggest, to them a positive attitude of friendship and kindness. But for the most part what is praised is an attitude of indifference, a serene and Pharisaic aloofness from the toils and joys and interests and sorrows of the common man. So one of them describes the saint in a series of comparisons as being like a lamp in a house which shines as brightly for the stranger as for the members of the household; like a tree that gives shade equally to the man who plants it and the man who cuts it down; like the sugar-cane that is sweet alike to the man who tends it and to him who crushes it in the press.

> So he who deems a friend or foe the same,
> Alike unmovèd though the world should blame,
> Or though it grant him fame.
> Whether a north wind or a south wind blow,
> It matters not to Meru—even so
> To him or joy or woe.[1]

'Meru' is the fabled central mountain of the world, immense, immovable.

[1] Macnicol, *Psalms of Marāthā Saints*, p. 37.

Again, another poet expresses the same idea in closely similar language:

> Alike are gold or dross to me,
>   Jewel and common stone the same.
> Ah, ne'er my soul can harmèd be,
>   Walk I in heaven or in the flame.
> Since all the universe are we,
>   Then what to us is praise or blame? [1]

'Since all the universe are we',—there we have the reason for this attitude revealed. It is not because of the claims of a law of righteousness, nor from desire to enter into fellowship with a God of love and holiness. It is because of his identity with the soul of the universe—an impersonal Absolute which is beyond good or evil, out of the reach of all ethical distinctions. This attitude of one who has passed 'above the battle' to a reign of indifference and calm is beautiful and gracious, but its grace is aesthetic and not moral or spiritual. Such 'aequanimitas', whether it is found in a Stoic emperor or an Indian sage, has a cold and statuesque beauty which attracts us all the more because of the heats and conflicts of our lives. It is so largely true of us that we

> glance and nod and bustle by,
> And never once possess our soul
> Before we die.

But if the soul that they possess is empty there is no gain from its possession; if 'the little farm of one's own mind' is barren and bare he who retreats into it still goes hungry. This is a sterile ideal that is likely to produce only hard or withered hearts in those who seek to follow it.

I think that we see the influence of this ideal of

[1] Ibid., p. 48.

perfection in weakening the power of personality, in merging the individual in the mass as in the class. It is true, perhaps, that the danger of Jewish and Christian teaching lies in an exaggerated occupation with the self, in excessive individualism. The Jew especially has always been, and is still, an individualist; his failure lies in his inability to develop a social consciousness. This is one reason for the tragedy of the Jew. So an exaggerated emphasis upon the inward life, too much occupation with the sense of sin and personal guilt, has sometimes produced gross evils and morbid growths within Christianity. In general the views of life that prevail in the West tend to produce, when carried to excess, overgrown personalities, such as become dominant and aggressive in the social organism, Napoleons and Kaiser Wilhelms. Its vice is the exaggerated ego. In India on the contrary the danger is from the weakening of the personality, the undermining of the power of self-determination. The effect of this is seen in the power of the caste which merges the individual in his membership of a class and substitutes the class consciousness and class-rule for personal exercise of conscience and will. 'The whole of Indian philosophy', says Professor Berriedale Keith, 'suffers from the fundamental error of ignoring the will.' The beauty of Indian character, it is true, lies largely in the virtues of self-effacement, of submission, of dependence. It has its own arrogances, of course, and its own tyrannies, but these are those usually that a class-consciousness has created. Its beauty is of a peculiarly gracious and gentle type. It is seen both in the infinite patience and endurance of its silent masses and in the waiting and longing for God of its great saints. Over all is the glamour of an Eastern

stillness—a stillness so deep that we cannot be confident, whether it is the quiet of a deep content or the final quiet of death.

It is beautiful with the beauty of dream, but this world is a world of wakened life, of struggle and labour, and to turn one's back upon its tasks means failure to fulfil its ends and to discharge its duty. 'Self-submergence', said one of the Indian theistic reformers who saw this danger in Hinduism, 'should not conflict with devout self-remembrance.' Quietism, the tranquillity that is forgetfulness of duty and of the claims of love, has been the chief peril that attends this view of life and its meaning and end. Tukārām claims to have found a peace such that 'the threefold fever has passed utterly away'. The question is, Did that peace send him back strong to bear and suffer among men and for men? There is certainly a difference in this respect between some of their saints and others. Those that are most fully theistic and least influenced by pantheistic notions and by longings for final escape from life and consciousness, those who dream of a fellowship with God as the goal of their desires, have some conception of the duty of service and of help of others. It must not be affirmed that what Kabīr calls 'the music of the forgetting of sorrows' lulled him and others like him to a slothful self-absorption. But, on the other hand, it manifestly did not fill them with 'the strength to be sacrificed and save'. Nothing testifies with such finality to this lack in Hinduism as does the fact that there is in it scarcely any impulse to intercession for men. The prayers of the saints are for their own needs. When at the outbreak of the recent war Hindus joined with others in observing a day of intercession, all they could do at their temples

was to have lectures on the causes of the war and the aims of the Allies. There is no room in their scheme of worship for such a thing as prayer for others. There certainly are some exceptions that one can find to this rule. The compassionate heart of man does find a way to feel for others and to bear the burden of others in spite of theory and system. Tukārām was too true and tender a soul not to have his movements of compassion for others and his desires for their deliverance, and sometimes he expresses them. But it is true to say that these utterances are rare and exceptional. The spirit of their religion, the ideal of a holy life as it rises before them and allures them, does not fill the heart with love and the desire to serve and succour others.

Hence, the lack of progressiveness in their civilization, their contentment to leave evils unremedied. Escape and not reformation is the aim to which their efforts are directed. Their ideal of life's goal may not create the arrogant oppressor, but it certainly does not create the deliverer from oppression. It is tolerant: it does not light the fires of Smithfield or let loose the horrors of war; but it leaves others to do so and does not concern itself with such matters. A cowardly contentment with things as they are—lethargy and sloth and indifference to good and evil—these are the dangers to which this temper of soul, in spite of much that is attractive in it, is apt to lead and has led in India. It does not create the strength of purpose, the steadfastness of character, the enthusiasm for humanity that India so grievously needs if her Augean stables are ever to be cleansed.

We must not, however, fail to note that in one scripture, the *Bhagavadgītā*, an attempt is made to present a more positive ideal of the way to attain

deliverance and redemption from the world. There, higher than the path of knowledge or the path of ascetic practice, is the path that he follows who performs acts indeed, but performs them without desire for fruit, so as to be unattached to them. He who lives so, freed from selfish thought or purpose, making everything he does an offering of love—such a one, cleansed from defilement, returns never again (v. 17). That is certainly a high and worthy ideal in close agreement with that which Christianity sets before us as the aim of our lives. Its emphasis upon the selflessness of work is a great and notable advance upon the merely negative 'worklessness' that previous teachers praise. But even here the old ideal looms above the new, overshadowing it and again and again it is set out in this very scripture. So the verses that follow on a description of this supreme path run thus: 'The learned look with indifference alike upon a very wise and courteous Brāhman, a cow, an elephant, a dog, or an outcaste man. They are victorious over birth in this world whose minds abide in indifference, for Brahma is stainless and indifferent, and therefore they abide in Brahma.' And so also in many other passages in the same scripture.

Thus it seems that one error of Hinduism is its failure to realize that, in the words of the Western philosopher, there is nothing in the world or out of it that is higher than a good will. 'Holiness is a great love and much serving', and no ideal is so fully satisfying and so powerfully constraining to those ends as is that which is manifested in Jesus Christ. There is much, as we have seen, that is very beautiful in the Hindu ideal. Strengthened and illuminated by the love of Christ, it should shine forth upon the world with a splendour and a charm such

as, perhaps, has never yet been exhibited in Western sainthood. Its error lies in its endeavour to 'do better than well', to climb to a region that is higher than love and goodness. The effect is seen in India's degradation, in the spirit of indifference that has left the mass of the people ignorant and oppressed.

---

## XI. HINDUISM AND THE WAY TO GOD

IT seems to us an axiom that holiness is the way to God. Holiness and God are for us inseparable, and the two words have been filled with a moral content which we do not realize to be the flower and fruitage of that long education and training of men which reached its summit in the life and teaching of Christ. Where He is not known these things are not axioms and the goal of life is not at all necessarily conceived of as a holy life of fellowship with a holy God. The Indian belief in transmigration with the feeling it presently creates that man is chained to life, that, though he may wander from dungeon to dungeon, he is a captive in a vast prison-house of suffering and sorrow—this belief, awaking, as it does, an intense desire to escape, has had the result that the Indian mind has been possessed and obsessed always by the problem of ways of deliverance. The thinkers and saints, whether of Hinduism or Buddhism, have not occupied themselves so much with seeking to conceive what the goal is like. What occupies them is the means of reaching the goal, the path of deliverance. We say, 'What of the way to the end? The end crowns all.' They scarcely attempt to envisage the end at all. It does not beckon them by its winningness and beauty.

They are not drawn towards it by its charm, as we are by hope in God, by desire 'to be with Christ which is far better'. They are driven rather by weariness and dislike of life and its sorrows and the bleak monotony of its prospect. This is true at least of Buddhism and it is true also in large measure of philosophic Hinduism. Here is how one of the ablest living exponents of Buddhism, M. Poussin, puts it:

'The idea of Nirvana generally cherished by the Buddhists is not a positive one. They know that existence is suffering. And they think that there is an exit, a Nirvana, deliverance from transmigration, from birth, desire, old age, and death: and that is indeed enough. Nirvana is looked upon as a deliverance; just as a man who is in jail wants only to be free, even so man does not want to be happy, he only wants to be delivered from the miseries of life. . . . It is to some extent an expectant attitude which leaves some food to the needs of the human heart.'

But that is Buddhism which is a system which denies, or at least refuses to affirm, the existence either of the individual soul or of God. Hinduism has never done so. On the contrary, its position at the highest and most daring summit of its speculation is an affirmation that the Supreme Soul exists and that nothing else does. Perhaps it may seem in either case equally futile, whether we discuss the way of the individual soul to a God who does not exist, or the way of the individual soul, who does not exist, to God. Strictly speaking, in Vedanta doctrine, the way to Brahman is simply to awake from the nightmare of existence and realize that the Supreme Soul alone is. The later formulation of this doctrine by Śankarāchārya, the great system maker of a later age who set in order the thoughts of the earlier sages goes

further. He declared their teaching to be that the world is illusion and that the sole reality is Brahman, who is one alone without a second. Further, this Brahman is impersonal. On this doctrine there is no question of a path to God: there is just an awaking to the reality of things. Self-consciousness is not real: Brahman, on the other hand, is actionless, non-moral, cut off from all communication with man. That is the region of the true, a region, according to this exposition of the Vedanta, that is definitely and necessarily beyond the reach of man —to which he only travels in a dream, which he reaches by waking, but his waking is his dissolution and the dissolution of all things and thoughts.

We may note that Śankarāchārya, who systematized this doctrine of Brahman as he conceived it to be taught by the old sages of the Upaniṣads, allowed at the same time that the god Brahmā (to be carefully distinguished from the supreme Brahman which is neuter) might be worshipped as the ruler of the world of *Māya* or illusion and as the Creator. Brahman being actionless cannot be conceived of as a Creator. Brahman is the source of the world, but in a remote, indefinite sense which does not involve him in its affairs, for to be so involved would have as its consequence that Brahman became subject to the law of *karma*. His relation to the world is accordingly—in order to avoid this difficulty—described as sport, *lila*: the world is a kind of dream conjured up by the meaningless and purposeless action of this magician. It follows then that there is no coming into relation with this remote and indefinable Being. He is beyond the reach of men's prayers or men's desires.

That is the Vedanta doctrine as set forth by the later philosophy of the great schoolman, Śankarāchārya. In

the original, unsystematic statements of it, however, as we find them in the Upaniṣads it is less clear cut and leaves more room for some real approach to a supreme but vaguely realized Divinity. These seers desire identity with this supreme soul of the universe and the climax of their thought, one of the supremely daring moments of the speculative mind of man, was when their thinkers conceived of the identity of the individual soul and the universal soul of all things. 'Thou, O Svetaketu, art that.' The utterance of that word by an unknown Indian sage to his disciple in the desert solitudes some twenty-five centuries ago was certainly a great achievement of the human intelligence and with the word creation widened on man's view: he obtained a glimpse of the timeless and the infinite. He was lifted above change and decay into a changeless region where there was, as one of them says, 'no sorrow and no snow'.

It was a great achievement and in a sense may be said to have been an approach to God. It was at least a transcendence of the world, even a redemption from the world. 'He who beholds the loftiest and the deepest', says one of them, 'for him the fetters of the heart break asunder.' There is an expansion in the thought, a sense of enlargement and freedom. Tukārām expresses it in one of his more philosophic and Vedantic moods when he says:

> Before my eyes, my dead self lies:
> O bliss beyond compare!
> Joy fills the worlds and I rejoice,
> The soul of all things there.
>
> My selfish bonds are loosed, and now,
> I reach forth far and free.
> Gone is the soil of birth and death,
> The petty sense of 'me'.[1]

[1] Macnicol, *Psalms of Marāthā Saints*, p. 79.

We can see that there was a real experience of liberation and attainment here, a sense of kinship with the eternal. There follows an assurance of immortality, for Brahman is imperishable. They have found in the midst of a world of flux something stable, what seems to them a path of reality. They have reached the inner reality of things, which is this Brahman.

From the character of this reality and, as a consequence, the unreality of all else than it, it almost inevitably followed that he who made this discovery gave up all connexion with the world. 'What shall we do with offspring,' they said, 'we who have this self and this world?' He becomes accordingly a *Sannyasi*. He forsakes all the interests and occupations of life, the service of men, and the worship of the gods. He cares nothing for the gods; for they are only parts of the illusion that deceives: they do not belong to reality.

Here I sit by the Jumna's bank,
 Waiting and musing and longing to die,
Pass me the legions rank on rank. . . .

Is it a god or a king that comes?
 Both are evil but both are strong.
With women and wantoning, trumpets and drums,
 Carry your gods and your kings along.

But while a few philosophers might be content with this attainment, as a real apprehension of the true, as union with God—they were inevitably only a very few. The majority of those who professed to travel by this road were impostors. This is how Tukārām describes the 'proud Advaitist':

To such pay thou no heed, the words he saith
Are only chaff, empty of loving faith.
He praises high Advait which only brings,
To speaker and to hearer, pain and scathe.

He fills his belly saying, 'I am Brahm.'
Waste not thy words upon him; shamed and dumb,
Is he, blasphemer, when he meets the saints.
Who scorns God's love Tukā calls vilest scum.[1]

Tukārām is here denouncing the Vedantists as impostors, and as prescribing a method of approach to God which produces only toil and pain and leads nowhere. It leads nowhere or it leads into darkness and silence. This is what many felt and what made them turn away from this high road with acknowledgement that it was very high and wonderful—but it was not for them since it seemed to lead to the abyss of the unconscious. When the seer Yajnavalkya explained the goal of Brahman to his wife Maitreyi with its apparent end in complete absorption and annihilation she cried out, uttering the protest that the human heart will always make against that goal as the attainment of life's end, 'Sir, thou hast landed me in utter bewilderment.' As a matter of fact these seers seem themselves to be in a strait betwixt two. They want to reach the final One. That is a deep passion of the souls of the greatest Indian thinkers. They want it, and yet, as men with human hearts, they do not want it if it means the final disappearance of consciousness. 'The double aspect of God', says E. Caird, speaking of this type of religious speculation, 'as the one in whom all is lost and yet the one in whom all is found seems to be expressible only by asserting the failure of all expression.' This attempt to have it both ways is to be found all through the Hindu development, for the goal of unity never ceases to call them, and at the same time the heart craves for fellowship, such a fellowship as cannot be in a unity of darkness and silence such as Brahman is.

[1] Macnicol, *Psalms of Marāthā Saints*, p. 89.

The question thus is one between an ultimate One—'One without a second', that is to say, a goal of absorption and the disappearance of consciousness—and an ultimate duality, when there can still be a consciousness of the relation entered upon, a fellowship, a communion. The difference is put simply and frankly in one of the Upaniṣads: 'Where there is a duality one can see the other, one can smell the other, one can address the other, one can hear the other, one can think of the other, one can grasp the other. But when for each everything has turned into his own self by whom and whom shall he see, smell, address, hear, think, or grasp?' The doctrine of a complete merging of the individual self in the supreme Self was obviously fatal to any real worship or communion—in fact, to religion in the sense in which the word has meaning or value. No doubt it was the recognition of this fact that made the Vedantists continue—in spite of the monistic doctrine that they taught and in spite of the fact that according to it gods and souls and prayer and worship and transmigration and *karma* and the rest are all illusion—to encourage in others and to practise themselves the traditional forms of worship and ritual. The supremacy of the Advaita doctrine continued, and continues still in India, to be acknowledged, but ways had to be found to satisfying human cravings and finding a path to God, even if he was declared on such high authority to be altogether inaccessible. Hence it came to be recognized that though gifts and prayers are of no value in themselves, and though the gods are creations of illusion, yet somehow or other 'the worship of the gods is of service in ripening men for final Release'. The gods are helpers and they are near and so their help is sought.

But the popular worship was not likely to remain

content to allot such a secondary rôle as this to its gods. And so presently a further accommodation with philosophy is come to, and the great gods Viṣṇu and Śiva are declared to be identical with Brahman. They are not mortal transmigrating beings, they are above the reach of *karma* and abide serene in the remote upper air far off, ' where human thought goes not ', as one writer says. Viṣṇu, says Rāmānuja, ' withdrew into his own nature and thus became impervious to the meditations and worship of the gods from Brahmā downwards, and of mankind '. How is he to be reached then? *Bhakti*, or ' loving devotion ' was the method by which earnest hearts had always sought to draw near to God in India as in every land. But if Brahman or Viṣṇu is so far off and so unapproachable, what place can *bhakti* have? The answer that was given to this question was that the way to Brahman or Viṣṇu, if Viṣṇu were Brahman, could only be by knowledge and enlightenment, but that one may rise to knowledge by means of *bhakti*, by the exercise of devotion to a god conceived as personal. That is a stage on the way to the highest.

Thus we have here a vague theology which leaves room for approach to God by faith and love, which retains the motives to love and loyalty that local association and tradition and legend supplied, but at the same time elevates the god to the highest place identifying him with the high mysterious Brahman. It is an adjustment that is full of contradictions and inconsistencies if closely investigated, but it serves somehow to give status and dignity to the worship and to keep the Brahman doctrine from dying of its own remoteness from life and its concerns. It vacillates between two deep desires in the Indian heart, that for final unity and identification

with the sole Reality, and that for the fellowship of affection with a divine Friend and Helper. We see this contradiction again and again in the poems of Kabīr. At times he speaks the language of the Advaitist: he seems willing and glad to pass into utter darkness 'beyond speech and thought'.

I have had my seat on the self-poised One,
I have drunk of the cup of the Ineffable,
I have found the key of the mystery,
I have reached the Root of Union.
Travelling by no track, I have come to the sorrowless land: very easily has the mercy of the Great Lord come upon me.
They have sung of Him as Infinite and unattainable: but I in my meditations have seen Him without sight.
That is indeed the sorrowless land, and none knows the path that leads there:
Only he who is on that path has surely transcended all sorrow.
Wonderful is that land of rest, to which no merit can win;
It is the wise who has seen it, it is the wise who has sung of it.

There is no question that this saint is foretasting the final goal of union and absorption and that the vision fills him, not with dismay but with rapture. And yet this is the same Kabīr who says elsewhere that Brahman and the creation are 'ever distinct yet ever united' and that seeks that union of love which is no absorption.

My body and my mind are grieved for the want of thee:
O my beloved, come to my house.
When people say I am thy bride, I am ashamed: for I have not touched thy heart with my heart.

That is a very different kind of union: it can have no meaning at all if it is not conscious. 'I have not touched

thy heart with my heart.' It is a passionate longing for fellowship.

As water is to the thirsty, so is the lover to the bride,
Who is there that will carry my news to my Beloved?
Kabīr is restless: he is dying for sight of Him.[1]

It is evident that there is a continual conflict in the deepest and most ardent natures in India between two desires. The longing for ultimate oneness fascinates and allures them, as it has, surely, no other people in the history of human thought. And yet they cannot shut their ears to the imperious claims of the heart for love and a consciousness of love. And hence this vacillation between two ideals, a vacillation which has ever been sanctioned, as we have seen, by the quite illogical and inconsistent accommodations of the philosophers and theologians. We hear their sages again and again debating which of the two ends they shall choose. 'When this language of dualism ceases,' says one, 'if it be said that one alone remaineth, who is there to bear witness to it?' That is the trouble about this attainment. It might as well not be at all, when one comes soberly to consider it. And again the same thinker made Kriṣṇa say, 'Were I to reveal the Brahma-vidyā, which rooteth out all idea of duality, then O Arjuna, the bliss of affection will soon have ceased to be.' Tukārām has his drawings towards the Advaita goal, just like the rest of them, and sometimes he rejoices like Kabīr in anticipation of it, but he realizes that the goal and the way there require the emptying of the heart of all that it knows as music and gladness while the way of *bhakti*, of love and trust and devotion, is filled with rapture and

[1] The quotations from Kabīr are from Tagore's *Hundred Poems of Kabīr*.

song. So knowledge without *bhakti* is, he says, 'a stringless lute'. And yet Kabīr can hear what he calls that 'unstruck music' and it fills his heart with satisfaction. 'There the whole sky is filled with sound, and there that music is made without fingers and without strings.'

We must leave them to their inconsistencies, recognizing that they are following instincts of their nature that reach deep down within the soul. Dr. Rabindranath Tagore is a theist, but because he is an Indian theist he too is drawn towards that dim unity which, if it is attained, means, of course, an end to theism and to all the religious aims and methods of theism. 'There', he says, 'where spreads the infinite sky for the soul to take her flight in, reigns the stainless white radiance. There is no day nor night, nor form nor colour, and never, never a word.' He is following there, like so many of his countrymen, the lure of a transcendent identity and the minor music of this desire gives much of its charm to his poems. And yet he is the son of Debendranath Tagore, one of the founders of the Theistic Samaj of Bengal. His father was fully aware of the peril to a religious life of this monistic quest. 'I was seeking', he says, 'to know my relations with God.' 'What we want', he says again, 'is to worship God. If the worshipper and the object of worship become one, then how can there be any worship?' The whole of this conflict of religious aims, which sums up so much of the religious history of India, is contained in a famous passage in the Rāmāyana of Tulsi Dās where Bhusundi requests the seer Lomas to teach him how to worship the incarnate God.

'The great saint, being himself a philosopher, devoted to the mystery of the transcendental, began a sermon on

Brahma, the unbegotten, the indivisible, the immaterial, the sovereign of the heart, unchangeable, unwishful, nameless, formless, identical with yourself, you and he being as absolutely one as a wave and its water; so the Vedas declare. . . . But the worship of the impersonal laid no hold of my heart. Again I cried, "Tell me, O Father, how to worship the Incarnate. Devotion to Rāma, O wisest of sages, is like the element of water, and my soul—which is, as it were, a fish—how can it exist without it?"'

We have seen how Viṣṇu and Śiva were identified with Brahman, and how as a consequence they were elevated to the same remoteness, beyond the reach of men's prayers, and forbidden, lest *karma* cast its chains upon them, to intervene for man's help. An inevitable consequence of this was that means were devised for bringing these deities near again, since they had been so banished. It is the same process as one sees in Neo-Platonist thought by which, because the Absolute is remote and inaccessible and can have no contact with the finite, more and more intermediaries are interposed between to bridge the gulf. So here there is first and highest of all Brahman: then Viṣṇu or Śiva is moved up to a similar elevation and some ladder must be set up from earth to reach to them. Hence the doctrine of *avatars* in the case of Viṣṇu and of emanations in the case of Śiva. Kriṣṇa and Rāma are the two chief *avatars* and are full incarnations of Viṣṇu. Here is how the *Bhagavadgita* describes the motive of Kriṣṇa's coming: 'Whensoever the law (Dharma) fails and lawlessness uprises, then do I bring myself to bodied birth. To guard the righteous, to destroy evil-doers, to establish the law, I come to birth from age to age.' He is able to take part in the affairs of the world without

being bound by them because of the new doctrine of action that is set forth in this scripture. Action, if done without desire, does not bind the doer. Therefore, Krisṇa though always engaged in action, sits unconcerned. In the *Bhagavadgita* the value of acts of ardent devotion rendered to Krisṇa is affirmed. ‘Have thy mind on me, thy devotion towards me, thy sacrifice to me ; do homage to me. Thus finding thyself, given over to me, so to me shalt thou come.’ ‘On me set thy mind, in me let thy understanding dwell: so shalt thou assuredly abide afterwards in me.’ These exhortations certainly appear to contemplate a real access of the worshipping soul to the object of worship and have made the *Bhagavadgita* the scripture of the religious revival of Hinduism. There is room there for fellowship, and the way of access is by acts of devotion and exercises of love. This scripture also has opened the door of approach for all castes and for women also. The old Vedanta had granted this privilege only to men and to members of the twice-born castes. But now Krisṇa says, ‘Even they that are born of sin, women, Vaisyas and Śudras, if they turn to me, come to the supreme path,’ that is, they may attain to emancipation from rebirth and abide with him.

But just as Visṇu had receded till he was as remote as Brahman, so it almost inevitably happened that Krisṇa and Rāma, Visṇu's *avatars* presently seem too great and high and partake too much of the inaccessible character of Brahman to have a near enough relation to the worshipper. Krishṇa ‘abides as one indifferent’, while Rāma, Tulsi Das declares, ‘is beyond the grasp of intellect or speech’. The consequence is that yet another intermediary has to be interposed as a means of bringing together the worshipper and this elusive deity.

This was found in the *guru* or spiritual teacher. This person is an institution taken over from the philosophical schools and established now within the popular devotional worship. Perhaps we may see in it a successful stratagem by which the Brāhman established himself there, as these worships became powerful and as the devotional awakening which they created threatened his supremacy. If it is so he soon has a still greater power within this movement than he had had before. The *bhakti* reformation becomes his sphere as the ritual and philosophic worship had been. It is not unlike what happened to some extent in the Reformation in the West when it appeared that new presbyter was but old priest writ large. So a *guru* had to be chosen by the worshipper who had to submit himself to his guidance, even worshipping him as God. They go further and say, 'The *guru* is mightier than Hari himself, for he protects the sinner from his wrath'. Kabīr and Tulsi Das and the Marāthā poets are all full of the praises of the *guru*.

It is the mercy of my true *guru* that has made me to know the unknown.
Kabīr says, 'The *guru* is great beyond words and great is the good fortune of his disciple.'

Jñaneśvar invokes 'the grace of the *guru*' as one great means of attainment to spiritual knowledge, and, personifying and addressing it, he says, 'Thou art a mother to the seeker: wisdom springs up in thy footsteps.'

In all this we see the heart of man ever striving to get nearer to a God that, in spite of all effort, remains remote and intangible and elusive. We see in all this the influence of the Brahman idea and the *karma* doctrine with its implication that a God really supreme must be out of relation with the world. It makes the supreme

God always necessarily beyond reach or unknowable. It makes it necessary that one mediator after another be interposed between that remote One and the worshipper, who so desires to reach his feet. This way of approach is certainly at its best the truest and purest that Hinduism has discovered. Its ardour has sometimes, under the influence of the Krisṇa tales, produced hysteria. The dangerous position of power and even divine dignity that they allot to the *guru* has resulted in abuses and excesses such as one might expect. But with all these warnings before us of the perils that beset a way of devotion and of affection, where the heart is unguided and uncontrolled, where there is no such figure as that of the Lord Jesus Christ at the centre of the worship to keep it steadfast and pure and sane, it remains true that we have here the most Christian aspect of Hinduism, the highest religious expression that it has reached. We have also a very touching and beautiful witness to the unquenchable thirst of the Indian soul for the living God. He may be banished to remote and inaccessible regions of philosophy. He may be the Nameless of a thousand names, 'the infinite and unattainable' (Kabīr), yet love will find out a way to reach him. Here is Tukārām's testimony and he speaks for the best and sincerest spirits among Indian followers of *bhakti*:

> Thy nature is beyond the grasp
> Of human speech or thought,
> So love I've made the measure-rod,
> By which I can be taught.
>
> Thus with the measure-rod of love
> I mete the Infinite.
> In sooth to measure him there is
> No other means so fit.

Not Yoga's power nor sacrifice,
    Nor fierce austerity,
Nor yet the strength of thought profound,
    Hath ever found out thee.

And so, says Tukā, graciously,
    O Keśav, take, we pray,
Love's service, that with simple hearts,
    Before thy feet we lay.[1]

[1] Macnicol, *Psalms of Marāthā Saints*, p. 73.

# PART IV

# PERSONALITIES

## XII. INDIAN WOMEN POETS

NO one who knows anything of India to-day can doubt that in all periods of her history—whatever may have been the social laws and conventions—the influence of women was powerful and profound. Even in the assemblies of the ṛiṣis, who gathered in the forests to discuss the meaning of Brahman and the way to immortality, the voices of wise women could be heard. Gārgī comes to Yājñavalkya with two questions, like a warrior, as she says, setting two arrows to his bow, and Yājñavalkya does not despise his adversary. So also to Maitreīy, one of his two wives, the same philosopher unfolded some of the subtlest and noblest and most elusive lessons that the Upaniṣads contain, so subtle and so elusive that many another might well say with this honest woman, 'My lord hath brought me to the bound of bewilderment, and I understand it not.' Women, if they have been mystics, have generally in all lands been, like Saint Teresa, practical mystics, no lovers of wire-drawn doctrines for their own sakes, but lovers of a truth to live by. And in India we may be sure that from the earliest days there were, unobtrusive, no

*Note.*—This paper is based upon a volume of *Poems by Indian Women*, issued in the *Heritage of India Series* under the general editorship of Mrs. N. Macnicol. Specimens of the work of women poets, translated by various collaborators, chiefly women, are collected in this volume.

doubt, and often hidden by the purdah, women of strong character, of robust practical sagacity, the inspirers often, the succourers always, of men. Ahilyabāī yesterday, Pandita Ramabāī to-day—there never, we may be sure, have been lacking such broad-minded, steadfast, capable, managers, whether it be of a kingdom or of a household, who spread round about them order and contentment and trust. But it is not of the women philosophers of India, nor yet of her practical women of affairs, that I wish to write here, but of her women poets, for it is in the poet, man or woman, that we can discover the deepest secret of any people, the ideals that they have hid in their hearts, and the thoughts and dreams by which they have lived.

It is a little difficult to know how to approach this subject, seeing that the women we have to deal with are so widely scattered across the centuries during three thousand years, and so widely scattered across the broad plains of India. They speak a bewildering variety of languages, and belong to a bewildering variety of ages, and yet there is, beneath every difference, a unity of speech that proclaims them all as children of one mother, heirs of a single heritage. When can we say that the figure of a woman poet first emerges from the shadows of the past? Is the earliest of whom we have any certain knowledge the Greek lyrist, Sappho, of whom, indeed, we know little enough? We may be sure that there were women from the very dawn of time in whose hearts were the seeds of poetry, whether or not they ever discovered fit expression for their disquieting thoughts.

> Very old are we men. Our dreams are tales
> Told in dim Eden by Eve's nightingales;

and these tales could never have been told, nor these dreams dreamed, if there were not an Eve to hearken in whom was a poet's soul. Already from among the Vedic Hymns, those earliest literary products of the Indian genius, there are some that are attributed to women authors. How far the names traditionally attached to these hymns can be accepted as the names of those who actually composed them is indeed doubtful. It is, however, at least interesting to know that primitive tradition did not deny to women the right to a place among the ṛiṣis who sang these ancient songs and led the worship of these ancient deities. But the subjects of their poems are not necessarily exalted. It may be estrangement from a husband, the fear of living unmarried, or the desire to be rid of a rival wife, that drives them with prayer and adoration to the gods. Then, as to-day, it is whatever awakens the deepest emotions that creates the poet. What may seem a foolish toy to us may be something that was rooted in the very soul of that far-off Vedic woman, and when the pain moved her to cry aloud that cry became a song. Everything that touches human life in its infinite variety is transmutable into what we call poetry. It may take the form of a nursery rhyme, or it may take the form of an epic. Who will say what wandering wind among the reeds will awaken the eternal harmonies? The first notes that reach our ears from the lute of an Indian woman are parts, humble perhaps in themselves, in the great symphony of those singers who chant their praises and their prayers before the altars of the Vedic gods.

These Vedic women singers are so far off from us, and their voices sound so thin and so remote in our ears to-day, that we need scarcely heed them. We cannot,

indeed, be sure whether they really were living women or whether they are no more than personifications. In any case they are to be remembered more for the company in which they are found than for anything that they can be discerned to have been or that they say to us. But when we pass to the next group of women poets, the case is different. Then we feel that we are listening to authentic voices, and that they speak to us what we recognize at once as the authentic message of this ancient land. Among all peoples, indeed, one of the most fruitful springs of poetic inspiration is the longing to return home from exile, whether the return be to one's own land, or to the loved one's breast, or to the bosom of God. 'It is the sorrow of separation', says Dr. Rabindranath Tagore, 'that ever melts and flows in song through my poet's heart.' And of those three types of exile that I have named, that which India more than any other land has felt in the deep places of her soul is the exile from God, the exile from that which is eternal. This feeling had not awakened, it would seem, at the time when the Vedic Hymns were composed, but from the days of Buddha onward a note of deep soul-longing rings through the poetry of India. This nostalgia, this homesickness, has been expressed with amazing depth and passion by the Buddhist nuns, whose poems have been beautifully rendered by Mrs. Rhys Davids in her *Psalms of the Sisters*.

Perhaps the most striking and resonant note of all those that sound in these Psalms is that of exultation in the attainment of release. I think it is Sister Nivedita who has said that the most passionate desire of the Indian soul throughout all its history has been for freedom. This is not, I need hardly say, the *swarājya*

that occupies so much attention to-day. It is deliverance from the bondage of the world and time and *saṁsāra.* Certainly in those far-off days, when it would seem sorrow and the fear of death and of rebirth 'hung like a pall' over multitudes in this land, that desire to escape had become a passion in those women's hearts. Of one, named Mutta, we are told that she was given in marriage to a hunchbacked Brāhman, but succeeded in obtaining his permission to forsake the world and seek for that release that Buddha taught. Here is how she describes her attainment of the goal :

O free indeed ! O gloriously free
Am I in freedom from three crooked things,—
From quern, from mortar, from my crook-backed lord.
Ay, but I'm free from rebirth and from death,
And all that dragged me back is hurled away.

It is not easy to be sure—I daresay she could not have told herself—how far her joy was for an earthly release or for a spiritual attainment. Mutta and her sisters were different enough in their outlook from Lovelace and the English Restoration poets, and yet in the letter at least their claims are closely akin.

Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage.

'If I have freedom in my love'—the Buddhist sisters would not have used such words as these, for they have abjured the love alike of earth and heaven. Here is a picture of another among them, on her bare and solitary hill-top with the winds—shall we say of life or of death ? —blowing about her :

Though I be suffering and weak, and all
My youthful spring be gone, yet I have come,

Leaning upon my staff, and clomb aloft
The mountain peak. My cloak thrown off,—
My little bowl o'erturned; so sit I here
Upon the rock. And o'er my spirit sweeps
The breath of Liberty! I win, I win
The triple lore! The Buddha's will is done.

What these poets above all things desire is inward tranquillity, victory over the world, with 'its sick hurry, its divided aims', its bondage. Passion must be stilled within them. Here is the way that Pātācāra shows as the way of comfort in bereavement:

Why mournest thou for him who came to thee,—
Lamenting through thy tears, 'My son, my son,'—
Seeing thou knowest not the way he came,
Nor yet the manner of his leaving thee.

By such cool waters their consuming grief is quenched, and these pale Buddhist sisters pass from our sight, chanting each her hymn of attainment of peace. Who shall decide whether we should call it a dirge or whether we should call it a paean of victory? In the words of Mrs. Rhys Davids, 'If freedom drew, not less did sorrow drive.

Woful is woman's lot, hath he declared,
Tamer and Driver of the hearts of men.'

It is not strange that in the poetry of women there should be especially this strain of sadness. To them, more than to any others of the human race, it has been appointed, as to the Madonna herself, that a sword should pass through their souls. But these courageous women of old time have looked into the heart of sorrow, and have plucked thence calm and strength—what Mrs. Rhys Davids calls 'an impassioned quietude'. And, having attained to such a 'forced and despairing peace',

they do not rest in it selfishly, but go forth to help and strengthen others. One passes unwillingly from the company of these gracious, dignified figures, 'roaming like a dream' the silent spaces of that far-off age.

And when we pass from them we pass into the bewildering confusion of the many tongues of medieval and modern India. The Hymns of the Ṛig Veda were written in Sanskrit, the Psalms of the Buddhist Sisters in Pāli, but we have now to turn to the speech of common folks, as it has been spoken for many centuries in the various provinces of the land, and as it is spoken about us to-day. Women had not always the right, and they had seldom the opportunity, to learn and use the sacred language of the learned. But the time came when neither men nor women could any longer be baulked of self-expression in the language that they knew best and that spoke to their hearts. Then began the blossoming of a new literature in Hindi, Marathi, Gujerati, Urdu, Tamil, and all the other tongues that the common people spoke.

It is not easy to pick one's way through the midst of this bewildering variety, or to judge of the qualities of these poets' work through the medium of a very imperfect translation. I propose to select, somewhat arbitrarily, from one language or another, what appears to me to be most interesting and most characteristic. Surveying the whole development, we see what we have already had occasion to note, that the heart of the Indian poet, whether he writes in a classical language or in the language of the people, is engaged more with eternity than with time. There are few songs of human love, but many of the divine love. There is little in praise of the world's beauty or of life's joys and affections, but much

in praise of the stony path of renouncement. Many of these poets, women as well as men, turn away from the colour and the joy of life and the comforts of earthly love. Their music is for the most part played, as one of them says, on a 'stringless lute'. The music that they make is indeed only incidental to their worship and their longing. These poet saints are saints first and poets afterwards, and, as we see them, fallen upon the world's great altar-stairs, they appear to be among the most austere and passionate of all the world-renouncers.

But it is only with the women among them that I have to deal. I think that the most remarkable of those of whom I have any knowledge is the Marāṭhi poet, sister of the great Jñāneśvar, Muktā Bāī. She is a dim figure, and some have resolved her into a philosophical category, but we may, I think, accept the view that she and her three brothers lived in the thirteenth century of our era. She is a worthy sister of Gārgī and Maitreyī, and moves easily and confidently among terms of Vedanta philosophy that might well make our modern brains reel. The story is well known of how she and her brothers were out-casted as being 'sannyāsi's children', and how, by their learning and their miraculous powers, they won their way to respect. Tradition says that she died at the age of sixteen, and if, indeed, she did, and wrote her poems before that age, that in itself was a sufficient miracle to convince the most stubborn unbelievers of her superhuman gifts. We find her singing, even as the Buddhist sisters did, though in language more philosophical and less personal, the same desire for freedom that so moved them, and the same longing for an inward peace. She is a traveller along the lonely road of

monism. 'Nivṛitti', she says, speaking of her brother and her *guru*,

> Nivṛitti, who has torn from out his soul
> All seed of passion, certainly declares
> That all are one; and Muktā Bāī
> With mind firm fixed upon the road
> To freedom—road that ne'er can weary one—
> Attains the knowledge of the endless One,
> Who fills finite and infinite alike.

Again she expresses in a beautiful figure, a figure appropriate to one who, though a philosopher, is still a woman, the same desire:

> Sleep calm and still, my child, where far beyond
> All talk of form or formlessness,
> Thy cradle has been swung within
> The very lotus of the heart itself.

She is speaking to the child of her spirit, Chāngdev, who is said to have become her disciple. A simpler and more quaint and human interest attaches to a poem said to have been written by her as an expostulation with her great brother, Jñāneśvar, when he was angry with her and shut her out of his hut:

> Graciously thy heart incline;
> Open to me, brother mine!
>
> He 's a saint who knoweth how
> To the world's abuse to bow. . . .
> Thou pervading Brahman art;
> How should anger fill thy heart?
>
> Such a poisèd soul be thine.
> Open to me, brother mine.[1]

Muktā Bāī was a Brāhman and a philosopher. About 100 or, perhaps, 150 years after her time, another poetess

[1] *Psalms of Marāthā Saints*, by N. Macnicol, p. 41.

arose from among the Marāṭhā people of a far humbler origin, but with a more passionate and appealing note in the music that she made. Janā Bāī was a servant woman in the household of the tailor poet, Nāmdev, and gave herself, as he did, to the worship of Viṭhobā. The god is declared in the legend to have been constantly in her company, grinding corn for her, drawing water, helping her to wash the clothes. 'Of God', she says,

> Of God my meat and drink I make;
>   God is the bed on which I lie;
> God is whate'er I give or take:
>   God's constant fellowship have I.[1]

She expresses, as her master Nāmdev did, with extraordinary poignancy of desire, the longing of the human heart for the divine fellowship. The purpose of this paper is not to deal at all with the religious teachings of these saints. It is not as saints that we view them here, but as poets; but, as I have said already, any worthy or deeply felt emotion lends itself, in a moment when the subject of the emotion is lifted out of himself or herself, to poetic expression. Poetry is

> The hand that wrings,
> Bruised albeit at the strings,
> Music from the heart of things,

and there is a music that issues from the very heart of the universe in such a cry as this of Janā Bāī:

> Blind one am I, and he that was my staff,
> Where hideth he?
> In what strange woodland tarriest thou, my hind,
> While I, thy dumb fawn, stray lost and seek my home
>   in vain?

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 50.

Apart from thee what can I do?
How longer hold to life?
O let me meet my Mother! Such the prayer
Thy servant Janī pours before the saints.

Man is a wanderer from his birth, a voyager on the great deep. Whether the poet be Janā Bāī or Dante or Percy Bysshe Shelley, the cry is the same cry in them all:

> The desire of the moth for the star,
> Of the night for the morrow,
> The devotion to something afar
> From the sphere of our sorrow.

It is not easy in the older Indian literature to discover any inspiration that is not a religious inspiration. In long periods of literary history the word saint seems almost to be a synonym of the word poet. If we turn from Marāṭhī to Gujerati and to Hindi the tale is still the same. Mirā Bāī was a queen and a poet, but she was first and last a devotee of Kṛiṣṇa. The story is well known of how she counted the world well lost for him. At last, according to the legend, she cast herself before the image of the god and besought him to take her wholly to himself. Thereupon, as the tale is told by Tod in his *Rajasthan*, 'The god descended from his pedestal and gave her an embrace which extricated the spark of life. "Welcome, Mirā," said the lover of Rādhā, and her soul was absorbed into his.' It is not easy, one has to confess, to appreciate through translations either the passion or the poetry in this lady's verse. And yet there must be something there, some tone or accent that escapes us but that appeals to the hearts of many Indian women. It may be the glamour of an old

story, waking what Kabīr calls 'the unstruck music' in their souls, something in them that one of another race cannot recover. However we may explain it, this is how the influence of this poet princess is described to-day by a Gujerati scholar. 'In a thousand sweet and homely songs', he says, 'the broken heart of Mirā Bāī sung itself out, and the love which the Rānā had claimed in vain was poured upon the divine and invisible ideal of her soul, and her songs live to this day, after 400 years. Pious women in Gujerat sing them in the presence of the same ideal, and feel they are nearer heaven than earth when Mirā's music is on their tongues. Young women sing them at home and in public choruses, for Mirā's ideal is held to be the ideal for all women, and the heart of Mirā was pure and innocent and god-fearing, as the heart of woman should be.'

In some ways it is a relief to turn from these 'God-intoxicated' women to one whose romantic story has passion enough in it, but a passion that is very human and earthly. The story of Rupamati, the Hindu wife of Bāj Bahādur, a Mohammedan and the last independent ruler of Malwa, is well known throughout the Rājputāna and Central India States, and her songs, though they have never been printed, are widely known and sung among the village people. She is said to have lived with her lord for seven happy years, but the end, when it came, was tragedy. When her husband was defeated by Akbar and became a fugitive, to escape dishonour she perished by her own hand. The love for each other of these two has supplied a theme not only for the poet but for the painter, and a charming scene, showing husband and wife riding together, is represented by artists of the Mogul School. Here is one of Rupamati's poems in

celebration of her love, as translated by Sir Henry Cunningham:

> Friend, let others boast their treasure,—
> Mine 's a stock of true love's pleasure,
> Safely cared for, every part,
> 'Neath that trusty lock, my heart,—
> Safe from other women's peeping,
> For the key 's in mine own keeping.
> Day by day it grows a little,
> Never loses e'en a tittle;
> But through life will ever go
> With Bāz Bahādur, weal or woe.

That tale and that charming avowal of affection must suffice to show that the Indian soul, for all its unearthly yearnings, was still capable of very simple and very human love and loyalty.

We have travelled across the plains of India from one province to another, and back through the centuries over two thousand years, and yet we have heard those women, with scarcely an exception, improvising upon one great theme, engrossed with a single subject. If we went to other parts of the country and listened to other voices we would still find them occupied with God and with eternity. If we try Tamil or Malayālam in the south, or go, instead, far north to Kashmir, still we find that, whether it be poet or poetess that sings, it is upon the other world, and not upon this, that their gaze is fixed. Of Āndal, a Tamil Vaiṣṇavite poetess, we are told that, like Mirā Bāī, she refused to marry any one but Kṛiṣṇa. Lāl Ded, the Kashmīrī poetess, was a wandering mendicant. Her verses are more gnomic than lyric; they have more of *jñāna* than of *bhakti* in them, but here is one expressing the universal desire with a beautiful simplicity:

O heedless one, speedily lift up thy foot (and set out).
Now it is dawn; seek thou for the Friend.
Make to thyself wings; lift thou up the winged feet.
Now it is dawn. Seek thou for the Friend.

There is one exception among these groups of poets of the earlier time in India to this engrossment with religion and its imperative demands. Persian is not an indigenous Indian language, but during the period of Moslem rule in India, Persian was the court language and the many poets that frequented the Court naturally wrote in it. Much of this versifying was little more than an elegant accomplishment, but some of those who practised it had a real poetic gift, and among these there were several women. In their company we find ourselves in a wholly different atmosphere. The love they sing is usually a very human and earthly passion, and their wisdom is the wisdom of this world. These ladies belong to a very different class of society from the mendicants and ascetics of whom we have mostly been speaking. One of them, Razia Begum, was herself a powerful and successful ruler. Nur Jehan was exposed when a girl by the roadside to die, but became the queen of the Emperor Jehangir. Zeb-un-Nissa Begum was a daughter of the Emperor Aurangzeb, and there is a legend, which, however, has no authority, that she was imprisoned in a fortress because of her secret love for Shivāji, whom she may have seen when he was himself a prisoner at her father's Court. Nur Jehan describes the prevailing occupation of her poetic gift in this similitude: 'The bud may open by the morning breeze which blows in the garden, but the key to the lock of my heart is the smile of my beloved.' Of Zeb-un-Nissa I am able to give an example in a rendering of one of her poems

by one who is herself a distinguished Indian poetess, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu. The poem is called 'The Song of the Princess Zeb-un-Nissa, in praise of her own beauty':

> When from my cheek I lift the veil,
> The roses turn with envy pale,
>   And from their pierced hearts rich with pain,
> Send forth their fragrance like a wail.
>
> Or if, perchance, one perfumed tress
> Be lowered to the wind's caress,
>   The honeyed hyacinths complain,
> And languish in a sweet distress.
>
> And when I pause, still groves among,
> (Such loveliness is mine) a throng
>   Of nightingales awake and strain
> Their souls into a quivering song.

How much of this poem is to be attributed to Zeb-un-Nissa and how much to her gifted translator I do not know, but in any case they are both Indian women poets of whom India can be proud.

In modern times, with the entry into India of Western culture and literature, new sources of inspiration have been made available to those who are moved to poetic expression, and a wider variety of subjects has been brought within the poet's scope. One cannot but notice that the beauty of the world about them seldom furnishes a subject to the older poets. The thought that it is all illusion seems to thrust itself between them and the joy that it might bring. It is, as far as I can judge, in the poetry of Bengal especially, that one sees this new birth of Indian inspiration, though it is to be found also in the Marāṭhi poetry of to-day. With Dr. Rabindranath Tagore, Indian poetry has entered into possession of a new and far wider dominion. Of him it has been said

that he is 'the representative man of his time, in touch with the fulness of his intellectual heritage'. It would seem that there are several Bengali women poets who share this full heritage with him, and whose poetry displays a new variety of interest. I cannot quote from the work of more than two of these ladies, but a glance at the translations from their works shows how the claims of natural affection and the sights and scenes of the world about them, and, perhaps most notably of all, the duty of service of the poor, and of help for the suffering and the fallen, now furnish their chief themes in a manner that is wholly modern and new. Mrs. Kamini Roy, for example, has these verses in one of her poems: 'Lamp in hand he went, not alone; on the way the light went out and so he fell. Will you not in mercy take his hand and raise him up? Will you not pause for him one half moment, friends? Let him kindle his lamp from your own lights. Let him go forward holding your hands. If you pass, leaving him in the mud in darkness, he will always remain plunged in the blackness of night.' One other example of the work of modern Bengali women poets must be quoted. It is by Mrs. Sarojabala Dasgupta, and is translated by an Englishman who is himself a poet, Mr. E. J. Thompson:

Lo, where the bird at rest
Twitters in careless ease upon her nest!
Throughout all storm wherewith the loud tree swings
Broods in the sky-flier's breast the pride of wings.

Though soft leaves interlace,
Making a hiding-place,
The sheltered life within does not forget
How strong she is, how free, by Nature's right!
Though nest and foliage fall, her refuge yet
Remains, the boundless heaven's unpillared height!

What a difference it makes when we have one poet interpreting another!

One is tempted to linger over the poetesses who have broken down the barrier of language and achieved noble expression for India in the English tongue. Of Mrs. Sarojini Naidu's work I have already given an example. Its perfection of finish and technical accomplishment win one's astonished admiration. She expresses herself with complete ease and charm in this foreign medium. To Toru Dutt, however, belongs the honour of being the amazing pioneer in this department of Indian literature —Toru Dutt, that 'sleepless soul', that marvellous girl that perished ere her prime. The story is famous of how the great English critic, Edmund Gosse, opened without expectation an unattractive pamphlet of verse, published at Bhowanipore, and read these lines:

> Still barred thy door! The far east glows,
> The morning wind blows fresh and free.
> Should not the hour that wakes the rose
> Awaken also thee?
>
> All look for thee, Love, Light and Song,—
> Light in the sky deep red above,
> Song in the lark of pinions strong
> And in my heart true love.

As a matter of fact, it appears that that poem was not by Toru Dutt, but by her sister, Aru, but it must suffice as an example of the work of this gifted family. Toru's work is by no means faultless, but it is full of spirit and inspiration. In one of her poems she describes three children, herself and her two sisters, listening as their mother sings to them of Sita in the forest. As they listen, 'tears from three pairs of young eyes fall amain, And bowed in sorrow are the three young heads'.

I think that picture of the three Bengali girls and their mother, listening with melting hearts to that old tale, is one with which we may fittingly conclude this review of the work of India's women poets. From the days of Sita to the days of Toru Dutt there have never been lacking in India women of true and loyal and passionate hearts, who could both live poetry and make it. When Indian women look back upon that long and notable inheritance, they may well be filled with pride in the past and with hope for the future. The spirit of India is still, to use the Bengali poetess's word, a 'sky-flier', and there 'broods in the sky-flier's breast the pride of wings'.

---

## XIII. RAJA RAM MOHUN ROY

RAM MOHUN ROY is a remarkable figure and occupies a remarkable position among the great men of India. He attracts our attention and our interest not only by reason of his striking personality, but also because of the particular juncture at which he made his appearance. He seems to step forth from among the mists of a legendary past into the sudden light of a new day. As is the custom in his land 'with one stride comes the dawn' and on its threshold appears this stately figure. There has never been in India any lack of saints and heroes, but they loom for the most part as vague and sometimes monstrous forms from among the doubtful shadows of the past. He first stands out a clearly discernible, but not the less on that account an heroic, figure, bringing in a new epoch in the development of his country's thought. He is, as some one has described him, 'the Father of

Modern India, its ideals and aspirations'. More and more as events unfold themselves in this land it will be realized that Rājā Rām Mohun Roy was the herald of a new age, that he kindled a fire in India that shall never be quenched. The movement to which he gave the first impulse is destined to have a far deeper and more permanent influence than any that went before it, because it draws its inspiration from a source of spiritual power that was closed to them. But at the same time I believe that it is in no respect different in kind from those great religious quickenings that are seen from time to time in the dim centuries stirring the heart of India. We are not for a moment to suppose that Rām Mohun Roy had no predecessors. There has never been in India any lack of saints and heroes. As with Luther so with Rām Mohun Roy there were reformers before the Reformation. There were 'Indian Protestants', as Mahadev Govind Ranade has called them, who when religion was fallen to the level of a philosophy or a ceremonial, prompted by the unquenchable instincts of the heart, opened anew the path that led to God. The great religious reformers are not men who have been made such by a realization of the intellectual shortcomings of the creed that they denounce, nor even by the spectacle of the moral corruption that results from religious decadence. They are men in whom has awakened a sense of their own personal need of a great personal Helper, and who summon men back to Him. The religious instinct, the desire for communion with God, can be satisfied by no system of speculation, nor can it be quenched by any ritual. It may be seven times enfolded by custom or convention, but it remains quick within the human heart like fire in a flint. The religious reformer is he who gives

articulate expression to this instinct of man's spirit, and in no country, and least of all in a land of religious aspiration, such as India is, have such witnesses been lacking. Rāmānuja, Chaitanya, Kabir, and Nānak—such names as these 'pierce the night like stars', bearing witness to the inextinguishable longing that even in the midst of unbelief and superstition lifts the heart of man to God.

It is in this view of his work that we must estimate the greatness of Rām Mohun Roy or any other religious reformer. Luther holds a high and enduring place in the history of Christianity in Europe, not by reason of his learning, or his statesmanship, or his eloquence, considerable as these may have been. He is great because the deepest religious instinct of the human spirit, which was being stifled by priest-craft and pedantry, found in him a voice that, echoing in the hearts of thousands, awoke in them anew the sense of God. So Chaitanya may have been a man of little learning, of no intellectual eminence; he may not hold a place as a religious philosopher beside Śankarāchārya, and yet the significance of his name in the record of the religious life of India is, we may claim, a higher one. It is a higher one because to touch the heart and to quicken the deepest instincts of a whole people is a higher achievement than to reflect upon and to rationalize them for a few. Rām Mohun Roy was no simple peasant like Tukārām or Kabīr; he was much more than a mere emotionalist, as Chaitanya seems to have been, as far as we can discern the true outlines of his personality. But the place that we accord him as a religious leader and reformer depends in no measure on his learning, his culture, his philosophical acumen. His influence did not reach to multitudes, nor did he touch the imagination or move the heart of the plain man as

other messengers had done before him. His name is not familiar on the lips of the unlettered millions of this land as is the name of Tukā or of Kabīr. And yet he rightly has a place beside them as a spiritual teacher; and at the same time he has a place far above them as one whose spiritual longing led him into a wider atmosphere and made him drink at deeper fountains of truth than they had dreamed of. He is a great religious messenger because of his intense conviction of the unity and spirituality of God, a conviction that he owed to no human teaching, and yet so deep and strong that rather than surrender it he went forth, when only sixteen years of age, from his father's house, a homeless and a friendless wanderer. But he is great as a reformer in a sense in which none that went before him is great because he fed his spiritual aspirations from a source that was open to none of them. Rām Mohun Roy was not a Christian as Christians generally understand that word. He would, it may be, have refused that name even in the sense in which Keshub Chunder Sen and Protap Chunder Moozumdar accept it. But he first among Indian reformers betook himself to Christ's teaching for inspiration and for counsel and thereby set himself apart from all who had gone before him, reaching forth beyond those horizons of India that had limited the view of his predecessors and marking a new epoch in the religious history of his land.

This pioneer of modern Indian and religious and social reform was born at Radhanagar in Lower Bengal in 1774. The place and the time of his birth were alike propitious to the formation of the man that Rām Mohun Roy became. Bengal formed the gateway through which at that time a new civilization from the West was sweeping in upon India. The year of his birth was the

year in which the first Governor-General of India was appointed and a new political predominance established. India has not yet altogether made up its mind whether to bless or to curse the day that saw England plant its feet firmly on its shores and lean forward to seat itself in the throne of the Grand Mogul. Indians have not yet made up their minds to rejoice in the loss that temporarily at least they sustained when England took the sceptre into her own strong hands, but they surely can recognize and rejoice in the more than compensating gain. In contact with the new ideas that flowed in upon the land India had its intellectual reawakening. More and more as time passes and the history of India can be realized in its true perspective, it will be realized that the touch of this young civilization of the West aroused and quickened to new power and new results spiritual and intellectual forces that, once so mighty, had for long seemed altogether spent. Whether England's political predominance proves a blessing or a curse, whether it shall endure and attain peacefully its goal in teaching this people how worthily and wisely to rule their own great land, or whether it falls into speedy ruin and is forgotten, yet it will surely be more and more recognized by Indians that the contact with Western thought brought about the re-birth of India and that one born, as Rām Mohun Roy was, in the closing years of the eighteenth century was born indeed 'under the opening eyelids of the morn'. And he was no less fortunate in his birthplace. As Nānak, in the very path of the Mohammedan invaders as they swept down upon the land through the North-Western passes, learning of them such wisdom as they had to bring, had his religious instincts stirred anew to life, so Rām Mohun Roy, likewise growing up in the very channel by which

the new ideas were flowing in upon the land, could not but be moved by them. There are many obstacles in India, from the nature of its peoples and the influences that surround them, that hinder the quick acceptance of new views of thing, but these are least powerful in Bengal. That province has been and is still a vortex of religious and intellectual experiments, and its 'vanward and eager' people have never been slow to make trial of any new aspect of thought that may be presented to them. The circumstances of Rām Mohun Roy's training still further helped towards breadth of view. He belonged to a Vaiṣṇavite Brāhman family and was thus born into the same spiritual inheritance as all the greatest religious teachers that had preceded him from Rāmānuja to Chaitanya. However much it was corrupted and degraded—and the testimony of Rām Mohun Roy's Bengali biographer is that at that time 'its immorality and corruption were simply revolting'—yet Vaiṣṇavism at its best had in it elements of real spiritual power and seems to have deserved Monier-Williams's description of it as 'the only real religion of the Indian People'.

Amid such influences Rām Mohun Roy was born and grew up. At the age of ten he was sent to Patna to study Persian and Arabic. There in his Persian studies he was attracted most, we are told, by the mystic teaching of the Sufis, by whom the high monotheism of Islam is presented in its most humane and spiritual and winning guise. And we may surmise that there also in the birthplace of Guru Govind, where a temple in his honour stands, he may have learned of that remarkable theistic movement which sprang from the contact of Hinduism and Mohammedanism and had Kabīr and Nānak for its prophets. From Patna he went to Benares, where he

studied Sanskrit and whence he returned—how far influenced by revolt from his surroundings, how far by his studies of purer faiths, and how far moved simply by his own earnest and enlightened spirit, we cannot tell—to his father's house at the age of sixteen a convinced and determined enemy of idolatry.

As yet, it is to be noted, he had come under none but Oriental influences. He knew no English. Up to this time and during the 'wander years' that followed we can imagine the eager lad, welcoming every spiritual impulse with which his sincere and ardent nature found itself in accord—Hindu, it might be, or Mahommedan or Buddhist. Whatever truth he recognized in the teachings of Sikh or Sufi found an entrance to his hospitable heart. But when at the age of only sixteen years he declared himself a reformer and set himself against many of the traditions of his home, he was what his own country and his own country's teachers and what the illumination of a sincere spirit made him. This first and decisive step in his career was taken under no foreign influence. Rām Mohun Roy grew more and more with the years a lover of his country in the highest and worthiest sense. But not even the narrowest patriot can refuse that name to him, when he became an outcast from his father's house for his religious convictions, for he tells us himself that at that time he had a feeling of great aversion to the establishment of the British power in India. But the enlargement of his political views came later. It was the question of his religious duty that at this time absorbed his thoughts. Not content with passive opposition to what he believed to be a corruption and degradation of religion this precocious iconoclast is said to have further attacked idolatry in a treatise which caused his father, like another Dasarat,

N

as he himself said, to drive forth his Rām into the wilderness. No more than a boy as he was, he was yet ready to suffer for his convictions, and the next four years of his life were spent by him wandering from province to province and even beyond the frontiers of Tibet, a lonely lad, sustained only by the steadfastness of his faith. 'We might well compare notes', says Mr. Justice Ranade, commenting on this episode in Rām Mohun Roy's career 'as to what we did at sixteen with such a record. Were any of us lighted up with the fire that burned in his heart?'

It was after his reconciliation with his father and his return from these wanderings that Rām Mohun Roy began to study English and, with increasing knowledge, to revise his estimate of the influence of England in India. He was never afraid to criticize what he believed to be errors in the government of the country by the English, but he tells us how he became 'persuaded that their rule, though a foreign yoke, would lead more speedily and surely to the amelioration of the native inhabitants'. He took his own path with characteristic courage and independence, unaffected either by the flattery of friends or the frowns of those whom he displeased. His boldness in withstanding superstition and such evil practices as *suttee* once more brought him into conflict with his father. After his father's death he prosecuted his campaign with still greater boldness, calling in the aid of the printing-press and publishing pamphlets in various languages. 'This raised', he says, 'such a feeling against me that I was at last deserted by every person except two or three Scotch friends, to whom', he goes on in words that a Scotsman is proud to record, 'and to the nation to which they belong I always feel grateful.' Even his mother, who

belonged to a powerful priestly family of the Sākta sect, was throughout most fanatical in her opposition to her son.

In such circumstances it must have required all those qualities which Max Müller attributes to him of 'unselfishness, honesty, and boldness' to enable Rām Mohun Roy to persist in his course. It is difficult to understand how Dwarkanath Tagore could have charged him to Max Müller with being a 'trimmer'. One sees no sign of it in the single-minded courage of his career. True, he prospered, and that has been brought as a charge against him. But there seems no reason to believe that his wealth was anything more than what his industry and ability had earned. From 1800 to 1813 he discharged the important duties of a Diwan or head officer under the Collector and Judge. In 1814 he came to Calcutta and, as he himself said, 'gave up all worldly avocations and engaged in religious culture and the investigation of truth'. From this time forward he devoted himself entirely to the task of grappling with some of the monstrous evils and superstitions that he perceived to be so rampant. He was ever a fighter, and there were abuses enough about him to keep his sword from ever rusting in its scabbard. Social reform, politics, and always and especially religion found in him an untiring champion. Especially religion, for he perceived that without a spiritual faith as their source and spring no efforts for social or political reform would have any permanent effect in bettering the condition of the people.

It is then to Rām Mohun Roy as a religious teacher that we must look if we wish to see him at the work which lay nearest to his heart and stirred him most

deeply. Immediately after his father's death he published in Persian a work *Against the Idolatry of All Religions*, and from that time forward throughout his strenuous life he was unwearied in his labours in vindication of the unity and spirituality of God. Whatever views seemed to him to conflict with such a conception, whether they were maintained by Hindu idolater or Christian missionary, found in him a relentless antagonist. However one may disagree with some of his arguments and believe that he misunderstood the Christian doctrines that he controverted, yet no one can refuse a tribute of admiration to a controversialist so earnest, so courteous, and by whom the religion he refused fully to accept had been studied in so serious and devout a spirit. Mr. Monier-Williams says of him that he was 'perhaps the first earnest-minded investigator of the science of comparative religion that the world has produced'. We have seen already how in his early years he came under the influence of one after another of various religious movements that have prevailed in India. He was no dilettante student of the truths that they taught. He read the Koran in Arabic and the Buddhist sacred books in Pāli. But later another and more potent influence laid its grasp upon him. In 1820 he published in English, Bengali, and Sanskrit a book to which he gave the title *The Precepts of Jesus, the Guide to Peace and Happiness*. The reason for his doing so he has himself stated in his introduction. 'This simple code of religion and morality', he says, 'is so admirably calculated to elevate men's ideas to high and liberal notions of God, and is also so well fitted to regulate the conduct of the human race in their various duties to God, to themselves and to society, that I cannot but hope the best effects

from its promulgation in its present form.' In spite of the unfortunate controversies in regard to Christian doctrines, and their relation to the life of faith in which the publication of this book involved him, there can be no doubt that the Christian religion, and especially the teaching and example of its Founder, remained to the last the dominating influence of his life. However mistaken he may have been in many of his interpretations of the Christian Scriptures, one can only respect the seriousness of spirit of one who took the trouble to acquire some knowledge of Hebrew and of Greek that he might understand them for himself without the aid of an interpreter. The pursuit of religious truth was not with him a parergon, nor did he enter upon it merely to gratify an intellectual curiosity. He was no Athenian on the look-out for anything new and strange in spiritual matters. Religion was not to him an intellectual luxury, but a necessity of life. 'To give comfort to the hearts of men was', he claimed, 'the only divine doctrine', and he sought this comfort for himself as for hid treasure. One of his biographers gives us a picture of him, worn out with toil, in controversy with a Buddhist who denied the existence of God. 'The Rājā', we are told, 'had spent the whole day in the controversy, without stopping for food, rest, or refreshment, rejoicing more in confuting an atheist than in triumphing over a hundred idolaters.' That is the spirit of the true prophet, of one who is a religious reformer, not because he may, but because he must.

It was inevitable in the case of such a man that he should prove a centre of attraction to others of a like spirit. It was of the nature of things that Rām Mohun Roy should found a church. I do not intend to do more than refer to his connexion with the Brāhmo Samāj.

†

After many vicissitudes that religious movement remains, a growth from the seed of his sowing, an enduring witness to his creative personality and spiritual genius. The Trust deed of the original Samāj, which we may take for granted to have been drawn up by him, is a testimony to his large-hearted and devout spirit. Its doors are declared to be open to 'all sorts and descriptions of people without distinction as shall behave and conduct themselves in an orderly, sober, religious, and devout manner'; and the lofty purpose for which it was established is 'the worship and adoration of the Eternal, Unsearchable, and Immutable Being who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe'. There is an elevation of spirit and a breadth of charity in these words that seem to me truly to represent that in Rām Mohun Roy which gives him among other and no less distinguished reformers in this land an aloofness and distinction of his own. He did not possess indeed the extraordinary emotional force and fervour of Keshub Chunder Sen, but there was in him a calm strength and a high seriousness that his more ardent successor too manifestly lacked. He was a man of war from his youth, and yet he was never so, one would judge, from any mere lust for battle. He was a fighter because the constraint of truth, as he perceived it, lay hard upon him. There was in him a resolute candour that would set no custom or convention, however accredited, higher than what he recognized to be the truth. He never appears to us a partisan, never perplexed by personal ambition or selfish strife. He looks forth upon us from the opening years of that century 'with habitually grave countenance', serene and alone, like some legendary hero, scattering the night of superstition by 'lucid shafts of day'.

But while Rām Mohun Roy was pre-eminently a religious teacher and reformer, so that, as Max Müller has said, 'in India his name has been enrolled in the book of the prophets', his labours for the social improvement of his people were no less strenuous and no less fruitful. With the abolition of *suttee*, the purging from his country of that supreme shame, his name is linked for all time in the history of India. 'If the credit of putting an end to these horrors belongs to any man,' says the late Mr. Justice Ranade, 'that credit must be given to Rājā Rām Mohun Roy.' It is difficult to realize how completely this awful custom held India in its grasp less than a hundred years ago. In one year 463 widows were burned in Bengal alone. In 1818 the number was 839. In Calcutta, in the very shadow of British law-courts and with the tacit permission of British Governors-General, widows were burned every year by the hundred. Nor were the most of these victims women already tottering on the verge of the grave, for whom life had lost all sweetness. Of those who were sacrificed in Bengal in 1823, 208 were between twenty and forty years of age, and thirty-two were actually young girls under twenty. And though they went with vermilion on their foreheads, as brides adorned for their husbands, it is not to be supposed, as some would have us believe, that they passed with joy to the flames, counting the world well lost and all its pleasures, as they followed in the footsteps of their lord. On the contrary we are told that it was almost always necessary to bind the unwilling victim to the pyre, to heap the wood upon her so that all her struggles were in vain, to press her down with bamboos, and to drown her shrieks of agony with the din of tom-toms. Is it any wonder that Rām Mohun Roy felt his heart

stirred within him with an intolerable pity and pain as he saw such horrors perpetrated about him every day? The wonder rather is that it required eleven years of incessant labour in this cause, before his efforts were successful and this ghastly rite abolished. In 1818 he published his first tract against *suttee*; and not even in 1829 when the practice was made illegal could he rest from his labours and sheathe his sword. It was his unwearied zeal in this sacred task, and the fear lest his efforts would be even then undone, that were chief motives impelling him in 1830 to set forth to England on a voyage from which he was never to return.

There was no abuse prevalent in Bengal that did not find in Rām Mohun Roy a relentless enemy, no good cause but could count on him as a friend. Jeremy Bentham addresses him in a letter as his 'intensely admired and dearly beloved collaborator in the service of mankind'. The struggles of oppressed peoples in Europe, Greece, Spain, Naples, were watched by him from far off with intensest sympathy. But his love of liberty and his desire to bid forward on the path of freedom every fallen nation was the wise passion of one who knew that the worst of slaveries is the slavery of ignorance and evil habit, and that he who would be free must first prove himself worthy of his freedom. He knew that the only way of emancipation for his people was the way of illumination, and therefore he strove tirelessly against whatever might shut out from them the light. His appeals on behalf of the freedom of the Press to the Supreme Court in Calcutta and to the King in Council breathe the noblest spirit of patriotism. His petition to the King closes with these earnest and eloquent words:

'Your Majesty's faithful subjects from the distance of almost half the globe, appeal to your Majesty's heart by the sympathy which forms a paternal tie between you and the lowest of your subjects, not to overlook their condition; they appeal to you by the honour of that great nation which under your Royal auspices has obtained the glorious title of Liberator of Europe, not to permit the possibility of millions of your subjects being wantonly trampled on and oppressed; they lastly appeal to you by the glory of your Crown, on which the eyes of the world are fixed, not to consign the natives of India to perpetual oppression and degradation.'

In his attitude to education he was equally earnest and equally enlightened. It is generally Lord Macaulay to whom is given all the credit or discredit of having committed India to the policy of an English as opposed to an Oriental education. Macaulay, as we know, had no first-hand acquaintance with Eastern literature, but on the contrary such a contempt for it, based on ignorance, as made him reckon, as he said, 'a single shelf of a good European library worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia'. This, we are often told, was the spirit of those who launched upon India the system of education which still prevails. But there was surely no one at that time in Bengal with as intimate and as wide an acquaintance with Oriental literature and Oriental thought as Rām Mohun Roy, and yet there was no one more convinced and vehement than he in his advocacy of English education. To him it seemed, as he said in his letters to Lord Amherst on the subject, that 'the Sanskrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep the country in darkness if such had been the policy of the British legislature'. His desire was always to promote those means by which his fellow country-

men would be helped onward towards better living and worthier ideals. In his evidence given in 1831 before a Committee of the House of Commons on the Condition of India we find him in conclusion giving this wise counsel: 'I have no hesitation in saying, with reference to the general feeling of the more intelligent part of the native community that the only course of policy which can ensure their attachment to any form of Government would be that of making them eligible to gradual promotion, according to their respective abilities and merits, to situations of trust and responsibility in the state.' Whatever the subject he deals with one finds in him the same clearness of vision, the same broad-minded wisdom. Governors and governed alike could have sought the advice of no saner, no more sympathetic guide. Of a truth Rām Mohun Roy did more than any man to set the feet of modern India on the true path of progress and to set its face towards the light.

We have now come to the closing chapter in Rām Mohun Roy's career—his visit to England and his death there. He had long felt, he tells us, a strong desire to visit Europe and 'obtain by personal observation a more thorough insight into its manners, customs, religion, and political institutions'. But it was not to gratify his personal inclinations that he ultimately carried out this purpose. He went because duty and the cause of India called him. A determined effort was being made by the party of reaction to prevent the final ratification by the British Government of the law abolishing *suttee*. Feeling that nothing must be allowed to imperil a reform so urgent Rām Mohun Roy resolved to be present in person to support it. The question of the renewal of the East India Company's charter, which was to come before

Parliament, seemed to him likewise to call for his presence that he might do what he could in behalf of his country. The ex-emperor of Delhi also commissioned him as his ambassador, giving him the honorary title of Rājā by which he is generally known, that he might represent to the King certain grievances under which he suffered. Accordingly, Rām Mohun Roy sailed for England in 1830, 'the first Indian of rank and influence', as has been said, 'who had ventured to break through the inveterate prejudices of centuries by crossing the "black water".' I shall not speak of what he did in England, of the honours that he received on every hand from those who recognized his distinguished character and ability, of the affection that he won from those who came into more intimate relationship with him. The climate proved too trying for his constitution and he died at Bristol in the house of Miss Castle on September 27, 1833. But ere his death he had the satisfaction of knowing that the great work of his life was accomplished and that the crime of *suttee* would no longer stain the fair fame of India. He died as he lived, a Brāhman with his sacred thread still about him, and he was buried with no religious rites under the elm trees in the garden of Miss Castle's house. Ten years later his remains were conveyed to the cemetery of Arno's Vale, Bristol, where a monument was erected over them by Dwarkanath Tagore, his spiritual successor in Bengal. The inscription on the tomb describes him as 'a conscientious and steadfast believer in the unity of the Godhead', who 'consecrated his life with entire devotion to the worship of the divine Spirit alone', and goes on to state that his labours 'live in the grateful remembrance of his countrymen'. Yet we are told that his grave is seldom visited

by Indians, though so many have followed in his steps and visited the land where he, one of India's most remarkable sons, lies buried. Yet, whether he be remembered and honoured as he deserves so well to be, or whether he be forgotten, that cannot change the fact of the debt that India owes to him, its Columbus in the discovery of a new continent of truth. There is pathos in the thought of this deep lover of his own people dying in an alien land and among those of another kin, in the thought that another country keeps his bones. Yet there is a fitness in it. Still from his grave he calls his countrymen to lift their gaze beyond the horizons of their own land within which they have bounded themselves so long. He bids them rid themselves, in the quest for truth, of all foolish and narrow-minded prejudice, reminding them that

> Not by eastern windows only,
> When daylight comes, comes in the light,
> In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly,
> But westward, look, the land is bright.

It is this that sums up the debt that India owes to Rām Mohun Roy—that he first broke the bonds that had straitened her for centuries, he first showed her the way of freedom and walked himself before her in that way. The day is coming when India will say of him as was said in regard to America of Emerson—'He cut the cable and gave us a chance at the dangers and the glories of blue water.'

## XIV. DEVENDRANATH TAGORE

THE *Autobiography of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore* is undoubtedly the most notable religious document that has appeared in India in recent years and is deserving of close study by all who would understand the movements of the tides of religious desire within that land. It was originally published in Calcutta in 1909, but attracted little attention. It is the interest aroused by the remarkable poetical achievement of his son, Rabindranath, which has called for this new edition of the autobiography, now issued by an English publisher in a much more attractive form and with an introduction by the most able of recent expositors of mysticism, Miss Evelyn Underhill. No doubt the book will under these new auspices win the attention it deserves as a revelation of a singularly devout and winning nature. Those of us from the West who have been commissioned to bear a message to India and who feel ourselves sadly out of tune with the reserved and sensitive nature of its people should lose no opportunity of studying any revelation, such as this book gives us, of the springs of motive and aspiration which are still quick and moving in the land beneath the heavy crust of custom and of superstition. At the same time, apart from its unique religious interest, the autobiography has a singular literary charm, disclosing to us, as it does, glimpses of the same life, with its rivers and its boatmen, its dusty pilgrims, its heavily scented flowers and its sense of eternity ever pressing upon time, that gives so much of their strange fascination to the poems of Rabindranath Tagore.

Devendranath was one of the three great founders of

the modern theistic movement in Bengal. His long life from 1817 to 1905 traverses the whole history of the Brahmo Samāj from its origin through the period of its greatest influence and activity to what we must call its present decay. Rām Mohun Roy used to swing him as a child in his garden. To Keshub Chunder Sen he bore the affection of a father to a wayward and rebellious son. Surely few religious movements have had more remarkable leaders than those three men. Rām Mohun Roy appropriately bore the title of Rājā that the Emperor of Delhi gave him, a calm and dignified figure, 'moving unruffled through earth's war', laying the foundations of reform in days too early yet for passion. Keshub, on the other hand, was in the midst of the storm, no system builder but a volcanic personal force, ardent, emotional, wayward. Devendranath differs widely both in character and in career from the two other members of this remarkable trio. He is distinctively the Maharshi, as by common consent he has been called, the great *rishi* or sage, the representative to modern India of the ancient seers of the land. For that reason he is in some aspects the most interesting and the most important of the three. He is the most representative of the Indian spirit at its best, drawing his inspiration almost exclusively from the Indian religious scriptures. In this respect Devendranath bears a close kinship with another of the modern Indian religious reformers, Mahadev Govind Ranade. The importance of the place that these two men hold in the religious development of India, an importance greater in some respects than that of either of the other two better-known religious leaders, lies in the fact that they are so truly of the lineage of the saints and prophets of India. Mr. Ranade held that the faith of the Samāj

was the true 'Bhāgavata Dharma', that it was 'Protestant Hinduism', no new importation or invention but a protest against abuses that have corrupted the ancient national inheritance. Devendranath would certainly have agreed with him. India has always been recognized as so radically pantheistic in its religion that it is often taken for granted that anything that can truly be called theism that has sprung up in the land must be due to foreign influences. This is by no means the case, however, and these two reformers were fully justified in their claim. The object of the Tatwabodhini Sabhā, the original religious society founded by Devendranath, was, he says, 'the diffusion of the deep truth of all our *shastras* and the knowledge of Brahma as inculcated in the Vedanta'. He rejoiced to believe that by his efforts in establishing a rival educational institution to those of Dr. Duff 'the tide of Christian conversion was stemmed and the cause of the missionaries received a severe blow' (p. 101).

It is evident from Devendranath's whole life and from his own testimony in his autobiography that it was his devotional needs that were the impelling force in his religious history. He was not, like so many of the great teachers of India, seeking, as he says, 'to know the relations of man with the outer world'. His was a personal religious quest: 'I was seeking to know my relations with God' (p. 71). He knew that Vedantic monism was fatal to the religious life. 'What we want', he says, 'is to worship God. If the worshipper and the object of worship become one, then how can there be any worship?' (p. 72). It is this instinct that has kept alive the flame of a living faith through all the arid stretches of Hindu speculation. Over against the

'haughty Vedant creed' there has stood in every period of India's religious history some protest in behalf of the human desire for a divine fellowship such as expresses itself with such poignancy and depth on nearly every page of this autobiography. The Maharshi echoes the testimony of Tulsi Dās, 'The worship of the impersonal laid no hold of my heart.' In one passage which reveals, as many others do also, the gift possessed so wonderfully by his poet son of presenting common scenes by the wayside and on the river so that they become emblems of eternity, he describes how he was once in danger in a sudden storm on the Padma when suddenly he saw 'a little *dingi* that was coming from the opposite shore, like a *mocha* petal tossed by the wind and the waves', while its boatman called to him encouragingly, 'No fear, go ahead' (p. 53). It was such a succourer he craved for. 'My heart kept trembling. The path of knowledge is beset with difficulties. Who would bear me up, cheer and encourage me along this path?' (p. 51).

On every page we have token of the kinship of spirit between the *rishi* father and the poet son. There are 'the plaintive notes of the silent melodies'. There is 'the joy that throws everything it has upon the dust and knows not a word'. 'God', he says, 'in His great mercy gave me the spirit of renunciation and took away from me my attachment to the world. And then He who is the source of all joy gave me new life by pouring streams of joy into my mind' (p. 43). The book is full of deep sentences, expressive of such experience of the divine fellowship as all the saints have known, touched to a peculiar delicacy and beauty by the Indian atmosphere. 'I was satisfied with getting so much; but He was not content with giving so little'; that is only one,

but, as Miss Underhill says, 'it would have been golden on the lips of St. Augustine himself' (p. xiii).

One reviewer of this book has claimed that Devendranath was not a mystic but a prophet. It is not easy to make any clear distinction between these two names, but if the former is one to whom God is primarily immanent, dwelling in the world and in the 'lotus core of the heart', and the latter one to whom He is a transcendent source of law and of obedience, then this saint was both. That he was a mystic the parallels of thought and of experience that Miss Underhill has quoted so abundantly are sufficient evidence. The great teachers of the Upaniṣads whose wisdom found an echo in his heart were essentially mystics. He could spend half the night oblivious to all else reciting hymns and verses of the Sufi Hafiz. He was certainly of the company of those who 'by dint of their longing alone were enabled to gain the dust of His feet'. But he was also of the spirit of the Hebrew prophets. He felt the chastening influence of a transcendent Presence. 'I saw', he says, 'His terrible face, "dread as an uplifted thunderbolt," and the blood froze in my veins.' When the command of his Guide fell upon his ears giving him his commission and sending him forth, saying, 'Give up thy pride and be lowly like this river; go,' the thought 'blighted his heart', but no more than Isaiah or St. Paul could he be disobedient to the heavenly vision.

Why then has all this ardour and submission failed as yet, as it seems to have failed, to win an abiding response in the Indian heart? This is the question that every page of this record cries out to us. What element of permanence and of power was still lacking? He saw God without in the beauty of the world; with thrilling

heart he saw Him in the Himalayan forest while the half-moon hung above him in the sky. He found Him in the innermost soul within his soul. And he tried to see Him 'in that abode of Brahma where He exists in Himself'. But all these visions even to this visionary, and how much more to others who came after, could but be fugitive, not having been made clear and enduring in an historic revelation. The great mystics of the West have borne witness to the necessity of having their wayward impulses reinforced and made steadfast by the contemplation of the humanity of Christ. 'Ubi erat illa aedificans caritas a fundamento humilitatis, quod est Christus Jesus?' We can find no fault with the testimony of this great *rishi*, save that it lacks this crown and confirmation. But in the beautiful pages of this record of a few years of his spiritual history he stands before us as a symbol of India's long and passionate pilgrimage.

O Perfect Wisdom,
When will thy truth, ever new and full of light,
Shine in the sky of my heart?
Through the long night I wait
And watch the eastern horizon,
With face upturned and folded hands,
In hope of new happiness, new life and a new dawn of day.
What shall I see, what shall I know?
I know not what that joy shall be.
New light within my inmost heart;
By that light, full of great joy I will go singing towards my home—
Who would desire to linger in dreary exile?

# XV. SOME NOTABLE INDIAN CHRISTIANS[1]

SOME may deny that there should be any such thing as an Indian Christianity. The Christian faith is a faith that transcends national limitations and within it there should be neither Jew nor Greek, neither East nor West. I do not propose to examine this claim, but if we did so we should probably find that we had at once to affirm and to deny it. For it is certainly true, on the one hand, that the root in every Christian is Christ, and Christ is the Son of Humanity. Neither race nor colour nor education nor national prejudice need separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. In union with that love we are indisseverably one. But, on the other hand, we are what our time and our tradition and the air we breathe have made us. We see with various eyes and through veils of passion and prejudice and secular desire which seem to form part of our very being as men among men. In the case of most of us these things have become bone of our bone, and to attempt to isolate them and expel them from our nature would endanger the life itself within us. We have to accept these facts and govern our relationships accordingly, anxious only to exclude anything in such local and human characteristics that may obscure the light of Christ in us and hinder the attainment of His purpose for the race. We know historically that there was a Greek Christianity and a Latin Christianity, each with its own vision of certain aspects of the whole truth. The Indian soul may surely in like manner make its own contribution, which we may well believe likely to be one peculiarly precious and profound, to that great discovery.

[1] Published in April 1920.

It may, and without doubt it will. But so far there have been few indications of what the special character of that contribution will be. There has been little original theological thinking in the Indian Church. What there has been—if I may perpetrate something like an Irish bull—has been outside of the Church, the application of the Vedantic mind to the interpretation of Scripture. There have been one or two attempts of this kind, but they have been too superficial and too remote from the essential spirit of Christ to carry conviction with them. The Gnosticism of the Vedanta has been brought into association with some Gnostic elements in St. John's Gospel so as to suggest kinship of idea, but the kinship is more verbal than real. India's philosophy will have to penetrate deeper into Christianity if it is to contribute elements of value to its interpretation.

India has scarcely begun to pass Christian teaching through its own mind, to attempt the task of re-thinking it by its own processes of thought. It has hitherto taken its system of belief from the West, repeating the ancient creeds without question. Its theology has been for the most part an echo of the words of western teachers. That does not mean that it has not represented a genuine conviction or a real experience. But undoubtedly the influence of western religion has given a direction to the spiritual expectations and desires of Indian Christians which tends to produce in them a similar type of religious experience to that of their teachers. Or again they attribute their experience to the same spiritual causes as have been at work in the case of western saints and fit them into the western theoretic scheme. When, for example, they are moved to their soul depths by their vision of the Cross they are content for the most part

to accept without scrutiny the traditional theory of the Atonement as its explanation. 'The doctrine', says Dr. K. C. Chatterjee, 'which decided me to embrace the Christian religion and make a public profession of my faith, was the doctrine of the vicarious death and sufferings of Christ. I found myself a sinner and found in Christ one who had died for my sins—paid the penalty due to my sins. . . . This was the burden of the thought of my heart. Christ has died, and in doing so, paid a debt which man could never pay. This conviction which has grown stronger and stronger with my growth in Christian life and experience has now become a part of my life. . . . "A God all mercy is a God unjust", continues to be my creed to this day.' No one can doubt that these words are deeply felt and sincere. They reveal a large part of the secret of a noble and devoted Christian life. But at the same time no one can doubt that the experience has been poured into a mould presented to Dr. Chatterjee by his western teachers. There has been no serious attempt as yet to reinterpret these tumults of the soul in the light of whatever the long experience of the saints of India may have discovered of man and God and destiny.

That is the record on the whole of Indian Christian thought up to the present time. The theology of Baba Padmanji was pure Scottish Presbyterianism, that of Pandita Ramābāī is mainly what we may describe as Methodism. The Indian spirit is, as we shall see, richly and beautifully manifest in these and other Indian Christian saints, but it has been poured into western moulds, and these are sometimes ill adapted to do justice to its ardour and its depth. The theology in the case of most has not, as a consequence, the vitality and power

that come when the religion and its formulae are infused with a common life and are the effect of a common creative power in the soul. We find a similar situation in the case of the religious denominations in this country. It requires no argument to prove that they have little depth of root in the soil. They have been accepted and made to fit, however rudely, the purposes of the people's worship and their religious nourishment, but they have not grown up as the natural expression of their devotion and they do not proceed from any deep conviction. I believe this to be true, even if it be the case (though this is not my personal experience) that in some parts of India denominational distinctions are maintained with noisy vehemence. There always will be everywhere those facile fanatics who accept what they are told with a fervour as blind as it is shallow. Such persons do not represent the true mind of a people. The Indian Christian mind has not as yet fashioned either the formulae of its own theology or the framework of its own Church.

Not yet; but there are distinct signs of a coming change. The interest and the difficulty of the present hour in the case of the Indian Church are due to the fact that she is, as it seems, travailing in birth of what we trust is her true personality. Or, to make use of another metaphor, the waters are deeply troubled; is it by the coming of an angel? That is the question of the hour for us to whom the future of Indian Christianity is of such supreme significance. The awakening of the spirit of nationalism in the land could not leave the Christian community unaffected unless they chose to renounce their Indian inheritance altogether. It is true at the same time that the fact that they are Christians must make

a profound difference in their nationalism. The India that is to be must be for them not only a nation but a Church. If they are true to their Christian calling and their Christian hope the building of an Indian Church must be for them a deeper desire than even the desire to build up the Indian nation and they must feel supremely constrained to undertake this task as their own.

This Christian nationalism is a fact of the missionary situation at the present time which no one can have failed to realize and which all who love India must welcome with much thankfulness and hope. The Indian Christian people have at least begun to desire that theirs shall be the architecture of the Indian Church, that their own hands shall lay its foundations and build its high towers. The number of those who feel and express this desire is as yet small, but as they lead more and more will follow and their attitude and spirit in addressing themselves to this task is therefore of very great importance. A heavy responsibility rests upon them at this juncture as well as upon their foreign fellow-workers whose duty it is to co-operate with them and to assist them. The question of the hour is therefore, Whither are these leaders leading the Church? What call have they themselves heard, and what response is it likely to receive from the whole body of the Christian people?

It is too early yet to answer these questions with any confidence. That it should be possible to ask them at all is a great source of satisfaction. Let us look at once at some of the obstacles that the eager spirits among these new leaders have come up against and that are proving both a hindrance in the way of the realization of their ambitions and sometimes, in consequence, a cause

of disappointment and bitterness on their part, as well as of friction between them and the foreign missionary.

The first of these obstacles is the poverty of the Indian Church. She cannot take her own way and live her own life, because she is so largely financially dependent upon the Churches of other lands. The power of the purse is in the hands of the foreign missionary and without that power the Indian leaders feel themselves helpless. It is not necessary to examine this question more closely in order to realize how this may well be a vexatious hindrance to the accomplishment of ambitions that are not selfish or ignoble. The Indian Christian leaders wish to address themselves to the task of building up their Church, but the implements that they require for the purpose are in the hands of strangers who hesitate, perhaps, to entrust them to them. Hence such a bitter statement as that made recently by an able Indian leader, that the children of India longed to tend their Mother in her sickness but the foreign missionary thrust them aside and would not allow them near her. How can this difficulty be overcome and a free opportunity be given to India's own sons, unfettered and with the resources that they need at their command, to build the Church that is to be?

A second hindrance to the self-realization of the Indian Church that some at least of her leaders feel is closely related to the first. This is the downward pull of the mass movements as these pour year by year ignorant multitudes into the Church. The new leaders, eager to discover and to express the real spirit of Indian Christianity and to advance under the guidance of that spirit to new and independent achievement, feel themselves held back by this weight, so immobile and inarticulate. One

recent convert from the higher classes, a young man of alert and not unworthy ambitions, when he presently realized his new environment in the Christian Church expressed his disappointment in the words, 'I am buried alive.' It is not my purpose here to criticize these sentiments but simply to take note of them. We can see how much more difficult it is for a Church to attain to self-consciousness and self-respect so long as nine-tenths of its membership is made up of these classes. The fact of the mass movements, full of inspiration as they are and of promise for the future, yet makes that at the same time a somewhat distant future. There must be a long, slow process of transformation before these dumb multitudes find their souls, and meantime the minority that would have the Church live her own life and speak her own thoughts feel their purpose hindered and their hopes disappointed.

The effect of their sense of these obstacles has been to make the attitude of some of the Indian Christian leaders for the present at least critical and somewhat rebellious. They have scarcely begun to undertake any task of positive construction. They feel, I suppose, that they cannot get to close quarters with it because of these hindrances in the way. They see what they dislike and would reject in the foreigners' methods, how some of these tend to denationalize them and to deprive them of their Oriental inheritance. They have done little as yet to show how that inheritance may be safely secured for the Indian Church or to open new ways that may appear to them more suitable to an Oriental people. One can see how some western evangelistic methods with their impatience and bustle may well fail to appeal to the more meditative spirit of this land. Some of them perhaps

feel like the woman in the Scottish Highlands who said to the insistent evangelist, 'My mother has been praying for me for thirty years among the mountains and do you think I can be converted in five minutes?' The spirit that has brooded for millenniums upon the mystery of the universe will not and should not change lightly or easily. Ignorance and contempt can never find the way into the deep, dim places of the Indian soul. Those who are her own kin are likely to be most fitted to speak home to the heart of India.

Some feeling of this kind, to take a single example, was evidently present to the minds of some of the members of the National Missionary Society at their conference held at Bangalore last July. One characteristic of the interesting discussions at that conference was apparently the strong dislike that was expressed by many speakers of methods of western organization. What they sought was something that was most often suggested on the one hand as brotherhood and on the other as the possession of 'the Indian spirit'. Here we have two fruitful suggestions as to the characteristics that a truly indigenous Christian society should possess. It is not yet by any means clear, of course, what these principles would involve. Will the spirit of brotherhood seek to remain within Hinduism? 'The idea of "coming out"', said one of the Bangalore speakers, 'as the result of changing faith should give place to "going in".' Again, what does 'the Indian spirit' mean? 'I desire to adopt only two methods,' said one of the missionaries of the National Missionary Society. 'I long to have a Christlike character and I want to have the Indian spirit.' I think it was understood that that spirit must imply more inwardness and more prayer. The value of fasting, too, was emphasized.

'The *āśrama* method', said one, 'emphasizes imitation more than teaching, realization more than revelation.' These thoughts may well be the seeds of a precious harvest yet to come for India, and no one can desire anything better for the Indian Church than that those who met and talked together with such frankness and sincerity at Bangalore will give themselves in faith and devotion to the accomplishment of these desires and dreams.

We can discern the beginnings here of constructive effort and constructive thought. Another indication of the same kind is the formation in Madras of what is called the Christo Samāj, a group of men who meet to exchange ideas and stimulate reflection and effort along such lines of positive advance. These are hopeful signs of a mental unrest, a dissatisfaction with the past, which gives token of the awakening to self-consciousness of the Indian spirit. She is at least stirring in her dogmatic slumber. Perhaps we can judge best of what that awakening may mean in the future, and how full of hope and promise that future is, if we note some of the contributions that are already being made by great individual Christians to the presentation both of the Christian life and the Christian idea.

Let us take first one whom I shall not hesitate to describe as the greatest Indian Christian of this generation. I mean Pandita Ramābāī. Her history is, I think, at once an extraordinary revelation of the passion and the impotence of Hinduism, of the depth and riches of the Indian soul and, supremely, of the power of Christ. In the long, toilsome, fruitless pilgrimages of her parents and herself, their sufferings from famine, cold, and weariness, borne in the hope of an unseen good, in her mental

labours, no less arduous, her study of the gropings after truth of her people's ancient sages, in her devotion and in her learning, Pandita Ramābāī was and is the fine flower of India's quest for God. And she is no less so when her seeking has been crowned by finding. The same passion that drove her and her parents, as it drives so many, with hungry hearts across the plains of India—from the frozen sources of the sacred rivers to the hot, fever-haunted swamps of the farthest south—the same passion, no longer now athirst for itself alone but for others whose thirst is not, as hers is, satisfied, glows and burns within her still. The love of Christ constraineth her. If we desire any reassurance as to what the Indian soul is capable of when possessed by Christ, we have but to look at Pandita Ramābāī—not mainly at what she has done in her great home at Mukti, much as that has been—but at what she is.

There have always been those in the Christian Church in all lands and in all times whom the vision of the unseen has made blind to the things of time. They have always been in the Church, and they will, we believe, be found especially in days to come within the Indian Church. There will be those who are ready to count the world well lost for the sake of spiritual gain, for whom the things of eternity are so overwhelmingly real that the things of time matter nothing at all. For them men and women are not citizens of a state or members of a nation, but simply souls for whom Christ died. Pandita Ramābāī is of that company. She has not been denationalized by any influence from the West. Her desires are set upon other things; her citizenship is in heaven. She is, I think we may say, Indian in every fibre of her being, and none the less so because racial or

national or personal claims mean nothing at all to her beside the claims of God and of the things of the spirit. She is 'an apostle, not from men neither through man'. Methodism has perhaps influenced her theology, but God and India have made her the great, humble, devoted servant of Christ that, first and last, she is.

'Nationalism' means nothing to her. She is as truly a Hindu as St. Paul was a Jew, but St. Paul's desire for his people, as far as we can judge, was never for an instant that they might win national independence, and so it is likewise with Pandita Ramābāī. She would say, 'My heart's desire and prayer to God for India is that she may be saved.' She has turned away with loathing from the inheritance of Hinduism, whether as a religious system or as a body of legend and tradition. Herself a Sanskrit scholar, she would not allow her daughter to learn Sanskrit. To some of us, both Indian Christians and foreigners, as we look at the ancient Hindu philosophic system from outside it appears a wonderful spiritual fabric, woven, like the Taj Mahal, of moonlight and of dreams. But Pandita Ramābāī tells us how when she visited the Taj she found that beneath its marble towers there were hid dark dungeons where hideous deeds were done in old days, and she can never forget that this also is true of Hinduism. She remembers the black dungeons beneath it of cruelty and despair. For her Hinduism is quite simply 'the power of darkness' and from it the Christian can obtain nothing good. This is a point of view that is rarer to-day in India than it was, but it will be dangerous for the Indian Church if it is replaced by an easy tolerance and a shallow admiration that ignores what in Hinduism is implacably hostile to truth and righteousness. It is necessary, if Chris-

tianity is to retain its purity and its transforming power, that it have within it the Puritan and Protestant spirit which we see in such a Christian as Pandita Ramābāī. She and others like her speak out of a deep and tragic experience. Another Indian Christian of a similar spirit, looking down at the little brass gods used as ornaments in a missionary's drawing-room, remarked with quiet seriousness, 'These things always make me think of that text, " Thou shalt not bring the accursed thing into thine house." ' 'The accursed thing',—those who desire, and rightly desire, to have 'the Indian spirit', to hold by their Indian inheritance, need to remember that that is one aspect of Hinduism. We admire it, perhaps, sometimes because we do not know it and have not felt its dangerous fascination. It will need much wisdom on the part of the Indian nationalist to discern the spirits, to see to it that he separates the precious from the vile in his Indian heritage. He will need to be very careful lest what happened during the renaissance in Europe happens here, and along with the Indian spirit there enters into the Church the pagan spirit and pagan modes of worship and of thought.

Unquestionably Pandita Ramābāī, in spite of her attitude to Hinduism, is deeply, beautifully Indian and has brought with her into the Church most precious Indian gifts. Another notable Christian leader, different in many ways from her, who has made a great contribution to the Church of the future, is Narayan Vaman Tilak. As Pandita Ramābāī is of the kin of the great *rishis*, the seers, the sages, so Tilak belongs to another company that is no less characteristic of this God-intoxicated people. He was the latest and certainly not one of the least notable of the Indian *bhaktas*, of those who with

devotion and with song have sought to enter into fellowship with God. These are not ascetics, nor are they profound thinkers. For them knowledge by itself is, as one of them says, ' a stringless lute '. With ' the measure-rod of love ' they ' mete the Infinite '. They believe that *pectus facit theologum* and they follow, through despondency and rapture, the leading of their hearts. Of that gracious company was N. V. Tilak. He was a direct descendant of the line of Manikka Vaśagar and Kabīr and Tulsi Das and Tukārām. Pandita Ramābāī has her affiliation with the *rājarshis*, the royal *rishis*, the statesmen who served their generation for the sake of God and love and duty. Tilak was a *sadhu,* one of those whose thought always is to express their own private souls and their own private needs in passionate poetic utterance and to find solace in the love of a divine companion. His influence is personal but it is not therefore limited in its range. It remains in his songs which will be sung, we may be sure, for generations.

While Mr. Tilak's influence is so intensely personal and inward, yet it is true at the same time that it is strongly nationalist, though not in any sectional interpretation of that word. One of the influences that drew him to Christianity was the hope that there he would find a power that could restore his people to strength and self-respect. He was unwearied in impressing upon his fellow countrymen that every member of the Indian Christian Church is an Indian and that the Christian religion should be a great means of service to Mother India. He did this not only by precept but by example. For one thing he recovered for the Marathi Christian Church pride in their mother tongue. He brought such new life to a language that was becoming more and

more debased that, in the words of one of his disciples, 'it was like the breaking forth of spring in its freshness and beauty'. He also recovered for the Church the gift, specially precious in India, of music and of singing, giving them songs that were not foreign echoes, but voices from the deepest places in their own Indian hearts.

But these would have been gifts of little abiding worth had there not been behind them as their source and inspiration a vision that he himself had of God. He was, as I have said, a *bhakta*, but the *bhaktas* before him were seekers and not often finders. He was a seeker too, as every sincere soul in this uncertain world must be, but a seeker resting always in the triumphant ultimate discovery that had been made possible for him through Christ. No one can read anything of Kabīr or Tukārām without feeling that out of desolate places they were crying out for Christ, and that this is so, Narayan Vaman Tilak, son of their spirit, is the proof. With him the *bhakti*, the 'loving faith', that has persisted as a cry of the hungry heart through all the barren centuries in India finds in Christ its hunger satisfied. Here is 'the place of fulfilment of craving' and the cry of desire becomes a song of thanksgiving. For this reason he, I believe, more than any other Indian Christian, has shown the Indian Church the way, and led her in the way, into one rich province of her own inheritance that she can possess in the name of Christ. What union with God means and how it may be realized this Church may well reveal with a new fullness to the world. If we compare the Marathi hymn-book with the hymn-books of the West we shall notice how many more hymns there are in the former on the subject of union and

communion with God than in the latter. And for these the Marathi hymn-book is almost entirely indebted to N. V. Tilak. It is not perhaps an accident that the only English hymn by an Indian that has obtained a place in western collections is occupied with this same theme. I refer to Ellen Goreh's hymn beginning:

In the secret of His presence how my soul delights to hide;
O how precious are the moments that I spend at Jesus' side!

Thus N. V. Tilak has been a notable pioneer in leading the Indian Church towards a consciousness of her mission and her message. There is no conflict, in spite of surface differences, between what he has done and what Pandita Ramābāī is doing. Both are deeply Indian in the roots of their nature, and both have come into the Church bringing 'the desirable things' of their people with them. There is a third notable personality who is making a somewhat different but not less significant contribution and who, certainly not less than they, is Indian of the Indians. I refer to Sadhu Sunder Singh. This is a Sikh, thirty years of age, who has won the reverence and affection of Christian India in a fashion that is deeply significant of the longings of her heart. He wears the yellow robe of the Indian ascetic and as such he has put away the claims of home and family. The world can give him nothing that he accounts precious and can take nothing precious from him. But though he has 'put on the shroud' and rejoices in bearing hardness for the love of Christ, he has no ascetic spirit, otherwise he would not win, as he does, the love of high and low, of young and old. All who know him bear witness to the graciousness, the charm, the simplicity of his character.

His influence is a purely personal one; it owes nothing to organization or to institutions. At the Bangalore National Missionary Society Conference one speaker said, 'Ramkrishna Paramhamsa drew the world to him without moving from his residence. Sadhu Sunder Singh passed through India like a magnet attracting souls wherever he went. Let the worker learn the lesson that he who sits silently at the feet of his Lord does as much work as he who runs after men preaching till they are tired.'

The Indian Christians of the north and of the south alike have turned to this young man with an eagerness that has in it a deep pathos and significance. They see in him what they aspire to be. He is India's ideal of the disciple of Christ—a barefooted wanderer with love burning in his heart. In him Christ and Hinduism seem to meet and harmonize, and the Christian faith is proved to be no foreign importation but a flower that can blossom into beauty on an Indian stem. It is no hindrance to the reverence that this *sadhu* wins that he bears with him an atmosphere of mystery. Stories are told of the strange deliverances that he experienced in his perilous journeys in Tibet, of visions and revelations. These things cause our cold, sceptical natures to stumble, but India, perhaps, shows a truer conception of the mystery of things and of the reality of the world of spirit when she refuses to be unbelieving. When St. Paul came to visions and revelations of the Lord no doubt there were those in Corinth and elsewhere who shrugged their shoulders. When Sadhu Sunder Singh speaks of being in the third heaven and seeing Jesus, shall we refuse to him to-day a capacity for vision of the unseen and for fellowship with his Lord which we admit of another saint nineteen centuries ago?

Those who know the *sadhu* well, and who are not sentimentalists, have no doubt at all of his entire sanity and his entire sincerity. There have been things in his experience in the wild country of the Indian frontier and of Tibet which seem to us strange and hard to understand, but these are not the central things in the *sadhu's* life nor have they any place in his testimony. He is a humble, earnest, devoted witness to Christ and to His Gospel, and 'he passes through India like a magnet attracting souls', not because of the halo of mystery that surrounds him but because, in his quiet dignity and his complete unworldliness, he seems to reveal what India may be when Christ obtains complete possession of her heart.

These three great Indian Christians, Pandita Ramābāī, Narayan Vaman Tilak and Sadhu Sunder Singh, must reassure the most fearful and unbelieving of observers as to the rich promise that lies hid within the Indian soul. The gold of that land is good. There are many others as well as these who to the watcher of the skies 'pierce the night like stars'. It would be folly to shut one's eyes to the problems that make the future of Christianity in India seem to one at times uncertain and even menacing. There are influences that in the words of one recent Indian critic are 'materializing and proletariatizing' the Indian Church. But there are also in it these and other great men and women of faith upon whom Christ can build and is building His own eternal Church. They shall bear up the pillars of it. The foreign missionary can never take their place and he is foolish and blind if he imagines himself indispensable. When India can produce Christian statesmen like Mr. K. T. Paul, men of such powers of inspiration as Dr. S. K. Datta, of

such wisdom and administrative capacity as Bishop Azariah, there is no reason to tremble for the future. And when to such qualities as these are added the great religious gifts that are the peculiar possession of this sacred land and that, as we have seen, are already so richly manifesting themselves within the Christian Church, there is indeed no reason for fears or for forebodings.

# PART V

# UNCHANGING INDIA

## XVI. TWO CULTS OF POPULAR HINDUISM

HINDUISM is so huge and amorphous a system—if, indeed, it can be called a system—that it is peculiarly difficult to convey any accurate conception of it within the compass of less than a volume. If we study it in its classical scriptures, we conclude that it is one thing; if we judge of it directly by the multitude of its shrines and of its images, and by the outward aspect of much of its worship, it appears to be something altogether different. As a matter of fact it entertains the most hostile points of view within its hospitable borders. Comprehensiveness of a breadth that would horrify those who covet this characteristic most ardently in England is of its essence. Agnostics, pantheists, theists, devil-worshippers—all alike lay claim to a place within its fold, and their claim is undisputed. But, further, not only may a Hindu be a pantheist or a theist, he may even—so wide is this system's tolerance of diverse theories of the universe—be both at once. It is hopeless to attempt to convey within the limits of an article any conception of a heterogeneity so remarkable. It is, however, possible to select from among the bewildering variety of its cults some examples that are typical of it in one or another of its aspects. It is too often assumed, on the one hand, by its partisans, that Hindu-

ism is a sublime philosophy, or on the other, by its detractors, that it is no more than the worship of stocks and stones. As a matter of fact it is both of these, either simultaneously or separately, and many other things as well. If we examine carefully some selected specimens of the popular religion, we may see that it is too complex to be summed up in a single formula, whether for praise or blame; that, because it is a genuine utterance of the human spirit, it is at once too bad for blessing and too good for banning.

The religion of the ordinary Hindu, in the sense, not of the philosophy that more or less unconsciously underlies his worship, but of that to which he resorts for consolation, and by which in some measure he guides his life, may be classified in the main in one or other of two categories. It is either a worship of dark, sinister, or of gracious, kindly, powers. If it be the former, it generally is to be classed as some form of Śaivism; if it be the latter, it is most often a Vaiṣnavite cult, and follows the path of *bhakti* or 'loving faith'. Here again, however, a warning is necessary. It goes without saying that superstition and dark forms of fear may intrude in the most evangelic worships, and it may well be the case that the professed Vaiṣnavite is a man of very little faith indeed. And, further, we find, on the other hand, that the 'loving faith', that seems so incongruous with the often bloodstained, ghoulish worship claimed by Śiva and his company, is rendered to him in some parts of India with no less ardour than to the kindlier deities of the rival group. It may be affirmed, however, that the twofold division into Vaiṣnavism and Śaivism holds in general for the religion, and that the worship of the average Hindu may be classified in the one group or the other, according as it is

sombre or gracious, of works or of faith. For the purpose of a closer examination of the value and significance of his religion, we shall choose two specimens of cults that are popular and widely influential in Western India, one belonging to each of these two classes—those, namely, of Khandoba at Jejuri, and of Viṭhobā at Pandharpūr.

Jejuri is a little village about thirty miles south-east of Poona, situated on a railway that has been alined to pass through it by a company prudently mindful of the profits to be derived from a place of pilgrimage. Its temple stands prominently on the last low hill of a ridge running far out from one of the ranges of the Western Ghauts. Whatever may be the exact period of its building, tradition affirms—and no one need doubt it—that into its foundations, as into those of the fort that crowns the summit of a higher hill in the same range ten miles to the west, were built one or more Mangs, as a living sacrifice to the powers of darkness. This is part of the heavy price that that outcaste community had to pay for the dread that it inspired, and still inspires, as being peculiarly associated with infernal powers. It was not, we may suppose, because the god of the temple was himself of that demonic company that this grim tribute was rendered in order to ensure the stability of the foundations, but because, if any project is to be well established and to endure, it is safest to guard against the evil influences ever on the watch to injure. As a matter of fact, however, it might have seemed a work of supererogation, in view of the undoubted fact that the god himself, Khandoba, belongs by origin not to the bright company of the Aryan sky-deities, but, though described as a slayer of demons, to the dark, demonic worships of the pre-

Aryan aborigines. No one supposes that there were not fears of dark powers and practices of fetishism and magic that were firmly established in their influence over the minds of many of the Aryans beside the more wholesome worship of the heavenly powers. Just as there were in Greece Pelasgian cults that flourished alongside of the worship of Homeric gods, as there was dark Chthonic ritual as well as that rendered to the Olympians, so likewise, as the Atharva Veda proves, was it in Aryan India. But these superstitions, powerful as they already were, though perhaps accounted extra-canonical, were enormously reinforced on their entrance into India by the unabashed demon-worship already established in the land. An endless number of village-gods, disease-devils, earth mothers, sun-dolmens—powers of evil and powers of good —were presently absorbed into the Aryan pantheon under the general guardianship of Śiva, the Terrible, who was identified for purposes of prestige with the Vedic Rudra.

To that doubtful company it can scarcely be questioned that Khandoba belonged. There are indications that his cult in earlier times was associated with regions still farther south, where the aboriginal deities retained their strongest hold, and where Śiva worship is still specially powerful. The war-cry of the god 'Yelkot', which is still raised in his honour by his worshippers (though the word has for them no meaning), as the pilgrims gather together for his festival, is said to belong to one of the southern languages, and is interpreted by some as meaning that Khandoba slew seventy millions of his enemies and drove Buddhism from the land. Certainly there was in that part of India, and to the south, about the twelfth century, a determined persecution of

Jains and Buddhists and Vaiṣnavites by the more powerful worshippers of Śiva. The alternative offered to them was to subscribe to the statement, 'There is no being superior to Śiva', or to be ground to death in oil-mills. The legends that are associated with Khandoba may be coloured by reminiscences of that time of struggle. His close association with the soil of India is further indicated by the fact that his cult is to this day in the hands, not of the priestly Brāhmans, but of the simple shepherd class. Perhaps to this association is also to be traced the circumstance that, warrior as he is, wielding a sword and mounted on a horse, he is always accompanied by a dog, so that his devotees themselves are popularly called the dogs of Khandoba.

Whatever may have been the origin in the dim past of the worship that centres round the temple that crowns that hill-top, from which to-day echoes the shrill whistle of the railway train as it brings its crowded trucks of pilgrims, this god has exercised for centuries a strange authority over many of the simpler classes of the Marāthā people. Fisher-folk, cultivators, outcastes, come from far to fulfil their vows at his shrine and to obtain good fortune by looking on his face. When crowds of them are gathered round the temple hill for some festival, many strange scenes are enacted under the influence of the sinister deity that reigns above. Often upon some one among the worshippers the divine afflatus descends, and he trembles in its grasp and utters strange cries, while his women folk crowd trembling round, promising whatever he enjoins if only the god will favour them. Then, suddenly, with amazing swiftness, he darts from them up the long flight of steps to the summit where the temple stands, and, talking together in awe-struck whispers, they

follow at a slower human pace behind. When the power of the god comes upon any one, he believes that in that strength, as Samson, under a like influence, burst the withes, so he can shatter iron chains. Here may be seen a frail old man, quivering in his ecstasy, striving with feeble persistency to demonstrate the power in him of the god; but not even Khandoba can give vigour to his worn-out frame. Frequently, in these days of decaying faith, cunning comes to their aid to furnish proof that the deity has possession of his devotee; but one need not doubt that sometimes a strange access of strength comes to the believer and that the chain is broken. It is one of the regular prerogatives of those earth-powers to supply such energy. So the Vetal, another of those shadowy aboriginal deities, is the bestower of manly vigour, and it is within the circle of his stones, set up outside almost every hamlet, that the village athletes and wrestlers practise their exercises, and it is to him that they offer up their prayers.

It is perhaps to this same recognition of nature forces as supreme, and to this desire to be possessed by them, that another and more evil aspect of this cult is due. As in so many similar worships, whether Greek, or Egyptian or Syrian, so also here, a custom still persists of sacred prostitution on the part of the female devotees. A childless family go on pilgrimage to the shrine and vow their child, if one be granted to them, to be surrendered to the god. Or the boy or girl is stricken with disease, and a vow is made that if he but recover Khandoba will have him. The boys thus dedicated add themselves to the multitude in India of holy beggars; but the girls have a more sinister destiny. Of late this form of marriage to the god has been pronounced by the courts illegal, and

the practice, it may be hoped, will gradually disappear.[1] But there is little doubt that still, in secret, the rite is performed by those who fear more the displeasure of the god than the punishments of foreign justice. The great sword of Khandoba is taken from its resting-place beside his image, and, as in the days of the Crusades the lady was married to the sword of the absent knight, even so the girl becomes a 'bride of heaven'. This aspect of the worship of this god has close affinities with Śaivism in its character as adoration of the *shakti* or energy of Nature, a cult in some of its manifestations that neither the law nor public opinion permits to be practised publicly in India. Few of the forms of primitive religion are incapable of refinement and moralization as the conscience of the race awakens and its mind develops. It is scarcely possible to say of any cult, however gross it seems, that it shall not prove the root whence shall spring a growth infinitely nobler. But it seems as if of this worship of the energy of nature one may say this with assurance. It is the very negation of the spiritual and the deification of that which is its eternal opposite. It may lead on—and perhaps has in India—to metaphysical or theosophical speculations as to the meaning of things, to conjectures as to the ultimate in the universe, and how to become one with it; but its way, by the very nature of it, is non-moral, and it has therefore seldom grown to anything that can be rightly called religion. It is true that upon forms of Śaivism has been grafted, in South India, an earnest and ethical devotion; but that fact only shows that, while the human heart can never satisfy its hunger

[1] A considerable amount of success is attending the efforts, chiefly of the Society for the Protection of Children, to put down this evil practice, and several convictions have recently been secured in the courts.

upon husks, it can blossom into moral aspiration even from the dust and desert of such negation of its deepest needs. Even rites of 'riddance', ceremonies of magical purification such as are found in most of these worships, offered to Chthonic powers, can be transformed so as to express the thought of a spiritual deliverance from moral foes, and can thus become the germs of higher things. The worship of Khandoba, however, as far back as we can learn anything of it, was looked upon askance in India by every thoughtful and enlightened man. The earliest of the Marāthā poets writes of it with contempt in the twelfth century, and it seems to have changed but little in its character through the six centuries from then until to-day. The error of this whole group of cults, whether they are associated with the gods of the Śaivite pantheon or with Venus, or Adonis, or Ashtoreth, is that, instead of seeking to overcome and to rise above the forces of nature, they surrender to them. It seems scarcely possible to moralize a worship where unmoral nature is glorified, and the aim is not to restrain its passions but to become their slave.

The deities, of which Khandoba is a type, are many throughout India, and the practices that are associated with his temple at Jejuri, evil as they are, cannot be considered exceptional within the pale of Hinduism. It would, however, be a serious misrepresentation to select his worship alone as representative of that religion. It is only just to set beside it a worship of an entirely different and far higher character which, in Western India, has, and has had for centuries, an amazing and to a large extent a quite wholesome influence. To the east of Jejuri, on the banks of the river Bhima, stands on a level upland of the Deccan the village of Pandharpūr. It is

indistinguishable to the ordinary observer from hundreds of other villages throughout the land; but to the pilgrims that gather there, and to the poet-saints that have sung of it, it is heaven upon earth. 'You can buy liberation there for nothing,' says Tukārām, one of the most famous of those who sing the praise of Pandharpūr and of its god. 'There is an endless stream of pilgrims; they say: "We care not for heaven, for we have seen Pandhari."' And again: 'One must pass through death to liberation at Benares . . . but at Pandhari there is nothing left to desire before the feet of Viṭṭhal.'[1] Who is this god who has won such a passionate devotion, and what is the secret of his power?

The early history of this temple is as obscure as that of the temple of Khandoba. It may be, as some allege, that it was once a Buddhist shrine. It has been suggested that thereafter it was for some time in the possession of the Jains, and that there is an indication of a compact having been arranged by which it was handed over to the Hindus in the circumstance that each year a robe of honour is presented by the temple to a Jain. We have no clue to the cause of its remarkable influence beyond the fact that as early, perhaps, as the thirteenth century poets of wide influence over all classes of the people were devotees of the god and sang his praise. Viṭhobā, the god himself, is identified with Kriṣṇa, so that his worship belongs to the opposite camp of Hinduism from that of Khandoba, to that Vaiṣnavism which has sometimes been claimed as the only real religion of the Indian people.

[1] A scholarly translation of a large number of Tukārām's poems has been published through the Christian Literature Society of Madras by Messrs. Fraser & Marathe. It is from it that most of the renderings given here are taken.

Certainly the worship that centres round this god has some of the marks of true spiritual devotion. What is most significant in regard to it is its association with music and with song. Its history through six centuries, as far as that is known to us, is a history of the poets who sang the praises of this god and who worshipped at his shrine. Of these the chief are Jñaneśvar, a learned Brāhman, earliest of them all; Namdev, a tailor, who perhaps first celebrated his fame abroad, and is buried himself at Pandharpūr; and Tukārām, also of humble origin, but whose spell is acknowledged by every caste, and whose praise of Viṭhobā is familiar, in a way that perhaps can be paralleled nowhere in the West, on the lips of every Marāthā peasant. But though these are the most notable, they are not the only saints who have sung of Pandharpūr and of its god. The most striking features of the worship are connected with the great fairs, to which year by year people flock by the hundred thousand from every district of the Marāthā country. What gives these pilgrimages to Pandharpūr their unique character is the custom in accordance with which the living who throng there bring with them the spirits of the famous devotees of the god of ancient days. In fifteen different palanquins those saints come, each from the place in which he 'took *samadhi*' or passed to the blessedness of union with God, and each accompanied by a great concourse of fellow worshippers. Almost without exception each of these saints, who are of every caste, is at the same time a poet. It seems as if these worshippers were under some constraint to sing. As many as a hundred different companies of singing and playing men escort the palanquins, chanting the praises of the saints in their own or some other poet's verses. Within the palanquin are

models of their holy feet, in accordance with the beautiful custom by which, for a memorial to mark the departure of such a one from earth, they carve his footprints out of stone.

In other parts of the world, as well as in India, pilgrims journey far and endure much hardship to visit some venerated shrine; but nowhere are the hills and plains so furrowed by the feet of such wayfarers as in this land. No shrine in this part of India draws towards it the people's hearts as does that of Viṭhobā at Pandharpūr. There are thousands of plain working men and women who every year leave their fields or their shops to join the company of those who go up to this Jerusalem. Many of these *varkaris*, as they are called, spend their time journeying from one to another of the holy places that are associated with this central one, and visit their homes only at rare intervals. There is a prescribed itinerary which they follow as they proceed towards the chief shrine of all. To one after another of the places where saints that worshipped Viṭhobā are buried they go, bringing with them from each, if not the saint's footprints in his palanquin—for that is only borne once a year to Pandharpūr—at least his spirit in their hearts. It is a wonderful and indeed a touching testimony to the power over them of the thought of the devotion of the ancient sages. Carrying their little ochre-coloured flags, they journey from every quarter of the compass in bands, according to their castes—and they are of every caste—and in family groups, towards the city of their dreams and aspirations. How can a stranger and a foreigner hope to measure how much of real spiritual devotion fills all those hearts? Though many are influenced by less worthy motives, some are moved by a desire for real

fellowship with God. There is not as much crude passion mingled with their spiritual aspirations as there was in the case of the Crusaders. Vehement passion seldom moves the Indian as it does the more strenuous natures of the West. But in place of emulation and revenge there is the no less tenacious grasp upon them of a long tradition. As their fathers have done, so it is laid upon them that they also must do. And so a day comes when, perhaps without their next-door neighbour knowing their intention, they set forth, parents and children together, on foot or by bullock-cart, or perhaps in these days by train, to the *Pandhari* whose name has been familiar in their ears ever since they could listen and understand at all. One can imagine the children, as one village after another comes in sight in the long and weary journey, asking wistfully their equivalent of the question that the children that set out with their parents on some of the Crusades are said to have asked so often: 'Is that the Jerusalem that we are going to?' Often they never return, for when hundreds of thousands are gathered together in a village that is only meant to accommodate a fraction of that number, its sanctity, however great, cannot ensure it against an outbreak of cholera. Then the joy with which, as Tukārām describes it, they leap and dance on the sands of the river Bhima is changed suddenly to sorrow and to fear.

The name of the god is Viṭhobā, or, according to another form of it, Viṭṭhal. A popular and fanciful derivation of this name explains it as meaning 'receiver of the ignorant and destitute of understanding'. That certainly describes aright the conception of the god which many of his worshippers possess, and accounts largely for the intense devotion that his worship awakens

in many hearts. A legend of Namdev, the tailor-poet who at the close of the thirteenth century first sang the praises of the god, has been handed down to the present day, and illustrates the evangelic grace in Viṭhobā which draws many to his feet. The poet was at first, according to the tale, a robber, but the lamentations of an unhappy widow whose husband had been murdered by the band to which Namdev belonged pierced his heart with a sense of his sin and drove him, as he said, to 'make a friend of repentance'. He betook himself first to a Śaivite temple, but found no mercy and no hope in the grim god. In his remorse he thrust a knife into his head as he cried out for mercy before the idol, and when the blood spurted from his wound and defiled the god, the people of the village cast him forth in anger. Then in the hour of his extremity, the story goes, a vision bade him go to Pandharpūr, for, he was told, 'its patron god, Viṭṭhal, will purge thee of thy sins, and thou shalt not only obtain salvation, but renown as one of God's saints'.[1] One can still hear the same message of love and of forgiveness sung of this god through many a Marāthā village. Seldom indeed are such thoughts associated with other Hindu deities as have gathered round the name of Viṭhobā. An old Mahar, whose touch would defile those of the higher castes, may be heard singing at his hut door outside the boundary of the village, and getting, we may be sure, some comfort from the words where he has so little else to comfort him:

> Sinners are we—I and you;
> Viṭhobā alone is true.
> He receives the fallen too.

[1] This story is told in the account of Namdev given by Mr. Macauliffe in his monumental work on the Sikh religion, where also such of his poems as appear in the Granth are given.

One may well wonder how it is that round this rude image of a strange god of the Deccan these thoughts have gathered, giving it a halo of beauty and of grace. Whence comes it that of him they say, 'This one receiveth sinners'?

Some would solve the problem simply by the supposition that whatever here is akin to the Spirit of Christ has been directly borrowed from His teaching. It is not possible to enter in this place into a discussion of the obscure question of the influence upon India in medieval times of Christian thought. As a matter of fact, the hypothesis of indebtedness can neither be proved nor disproved. Apart from the general affinity, which is obvious between a religion of *bhakti* and of Divine grace, such as the religion before us is, and the Christian religion, there are coincidences of thought and expression to be found in many of the books associated with these faiths which certainly are striking. Some of these have been pointed out in other products of the *bhakti* movement in India, and even in the Bhagavadgita itself. From the Marāthā poets it will be sufficient to cite two. Jñaneśvar in one place speaks of the saved as 'sitting down in the Kingdom of Heaven' (*Vaikuntha*), while Namdev has this verse in one of his poems: 'When a man breaketh with his family and all his friends, then the Carpenter of His own accord cometh to him.' A closer examination, however, of these passages goes far to show that the coincidence of expression with the Gospels is no more than accidental, and that they do nothing to strengthen the theory of indebtedness to Christianity. Much of the controversy on such questions is futile, and errs by failing to recognize the fact of the universality of the longing for fellowship with God and of the natural

similarity, as a consequence, in its expressions. Mr. Chesterton has dealt sufficiently with the subject in one of his epigrams. 'It is gravely urged', he says, referring to another discussion of the same kind as the one before us, 'that these two Eastern teachers, by a singular coincidence, both had to do with the washing of feet. You might as well say that it is a remarkable coincidence that both had feet to wash.' Not necessarily by merchants of Alexandria was the thought of a God of Grace conveyed to India. The shrine of Viṭhobā bears witness that there may often through the centuries have been 'the traffic of Jacob's ladder' between Heaven and Pandharpūr.

These two typical worships, that of Khandoba and that of Viṭhobā, serve to show what winds, strangely diverse and contrary, blow across the souls of men within the pale of Hinduism. Sometimes they are pure airs from Heaven; oftener these airs mingle with poisonous vapours of the earth. The only formula that can reconcile them all is Hinduism, which calls them all alike illusion, toys, no matter whether golliwog or angel, to please a child until, grown wise, it turns from them to the deep and dreamless sleep of Brahman.

---

## XVII

## THE DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN VILLAGER

A FRIEND of the writer whose duty required him to travel many weary miles by bicycle through desert places in the Nizam's Dominions came one day to where,

as a bridge was being built, a temporary road had been provided, branching off from the main highway. A thoughtful Government, lest the wayfaring man should prove a fool, had set up a notice for his guidance, bearing the legend, 'Here take diversion'. It cheered the dusty traveller mightily as he read it, and he followed the advice and went on his way rejoicing.

There seems to a casual observer to be little that is diverting about the wide, empty, dust-swept spaces in the midst of which the Indian village people spend their lives. They have no cinemas to cheer them. Even to get drunk, that convenient exit from monotony, involves usually a long and toilsome journey to the nearest liquor shop. Nature, it is true, provides sometimes variety, such as none of us has much longing for. There are life and death in every village, however remote it may be; there are also love and anguish and despair, wherever there is human life. Also, if he has eyes to see them, 'there's night and day, brother, both sweet things'. But there must, one would think, be long, dull tracts in the life of the villager, and especially, perhaps, in the life of the village child. The African dances mightily, they say, whenever the opportunity offers; the Chinaman has, or had, in his opium pipe, a short cut to what seemed to him Paradise. What has the poor Indian villager to keep him from perishing of ennui, while the dust drives across his fields or the rain soaks him, or the merciless sun beats down upon him?

That is how, perhaps, things appear to the casual observer, looking from the window of the 'Race Special' at the brown, thatched huts he sweeps past and the brown, naked children that gaze from their doorways. But these simple people, no less than he, have their

recreations, and who shall say that his are higher in the scale of civilization than are theirs? Colour and cheerfulness come into their lives, too, and they know how to 'take diversion'. Mr. Justice Ranade was fond of quoting a sentence from an Upaniṣad, 'If there were no spirit of joy in the universe who could live or breathe in this world of life?' Who indeed? We must 'escape' if we would go on living, and there are ways of escape in the Indian village, just as there are in London or in Paris.

The word *tamasha* is often used by foreigners in a way that appears to Indians incongruous or absurd. They speak of a banquet or a Government House garden party as a *tamasha* without realizing what the word suggests. Its dictionary meaning is 'a diverting exhibition', and while, no doubt, that is how some of these functions appear to the Comic Spirit, it is not the aspect that they are intended to present. A *tamasha* is the chief village recreation and it is nothing in the least dignified or elevating. It is a kind of crude dramatic performance accompanied by dancing and the singing of songs that are often degrading enough. They say that of late, in consequence of the increasing caste-bitterness that has arisen in many Deccan villages, the *tamasha* is being used by the Marāthās to lampoon the Brāhmans.

The Satya Śodhak Samāj is a society established many years ago by an earnest Poona Marāthā to promote religious reflection and reform among the Māli and Marāthā castes, who are, perhaps, the most reluctant of all the classes in this part of India to awaken from their long slumber and stagnation. For many years it aroused little interest and was no centre of passionate

feeling. Now, however, it has to all appearance largely changed its character and become an actively anti-Brāhman organization, within which rages a fierce spirit of anger and revenge. The Brāhmans—non-co-operators in many cases—have felt constrained on occasion recently to obtain an injunction against some of the *tamashas* that the Society has organized as inciting to hatred—much the same charge, one remembers, as was brought against certain Brāhman leaders in the Deccan not so long ago by the Government.

But one sees on every hand in these days that what is sauce for the Government goose is by no means sauce for the Brāhman gander, whether in Rae Bareilly or in Baramati. Hate is not a diversion that one desires should become prevalent in these villages or elsewhere, though it may bring variety into monotonous lives. If the barber refuses to shave the Brāhman he is, no doubt, exercising his right to non-co-operation, and the irony of the spectacle may divert the onlooker, but there is never need to add fuel to the fires of enmity and ill-will that are so ready to break forth wherever there are sons of Adam.

Many years ago Sir George Birdwood described the Deccan village homestead as it appeared to him. To him it seemed that its people breathed an atmosphere of piety and worship. The going forth of the cattle to the fields in the morning was a sacrament, and their return again at night. Every act of the peasant had the appearance to this idealizer of a service of devotion. It is scarcely possible for any one who knows anything of them so to envisage the life of the village people. It is true that each of the occupations of his life to the true Hindu has an aspect towards the divine, but the villager

is too bound to material things to remember this save when fear or sickness thrusts the fact upon him. And yet we know how much that is beautiful in its religious aspiration and how much that is intense in its religious passion has come forth from these Deccan village homes, where the pressure of physical need and the drudgery of physical toil might well have been expected to engross all their thoughts.

Religion is not usually classed among the 'diversions' of life, but among all peoples, and certainly among the simple peasantry of India, it has furnished a way of escape from life's dreariness and monotony, a means of enlargement for the soul, straitened by the pressure of the things of sense. It is, perhaps, his fears more often than his hopes and longings that build the village shrines and cause them to be reverenced. And fear of lurking demons is no more an elevating influence or one to be desired than hate of the Brāhman. But even these malignant godlings have their feast-days when they show a friendly aspect to their worshipper, and when he pays his vows in the temple with a light heart. For the children, at least, the expedition to the centre of festival is a time of pure enjoyment and delight. There is the journey in a crowded cart; there are the companies of new people and of other children to watch; there are also the strange beings that the feast has attracted to profit by the generosity of the pious—a blend of holy man and harlequin, who dance and whirl about them their great whips and jingle their brazen anklets. The occasion is to the children simply a picnic, though their mother may have a vow to pay that weighs upon her, or their father may cherish in his heart a fervent longing to have a vision of the god. Similarly there are funeral

feasts that are no more wholly mournful than is an Irish wake.

Some households, too, have their *guru*, who comes on his visitation, perhaps once a year, and whose coming is a notable event in the quiet village life, profitable, we may believe, to the disciples who touch his feet, even more than to the *guru* himself, who collects his fees. Humbler 'religious' visitants, who are more frankly out 'for fun' or for their own profit, are those who lead about from village to village the dedicated bullock or *nandi beil*, which has been taught to perform some simple tricks that, no doubt, seem as wonderful to the village children as did Maskelyne and Cook to us in our young days.

There are other and far more elevating religious influences that touch many lives and provide, we may believe, real mental and spiritual nourishment as well as entertainment and diversion. Such are those that come from the singing of the sacred songs in which the saints and poets of old days uttered their aspirations, and which still come home with moving power to the hearts of the common people. The village 'bhajan party', who sing the psalms of Tukārām, fulfil much the same role in the village life as the church choir or the sacred concert in Western lands. If there is among them a capable *kirtankār* or Haridās, a leader and expounder of the songs, then they may even journey on some high day of festival to Pandharpūr, or Dehū, or Alandī, and join with multitudes from every district of the Marāthā country in fervent adoration. Such an expedition is, of course, a great event in the life of any village, looked forward to for many a month, no doubt, and recalled and recounted on many a dull evening afterwards. One

has seen how in old Germany, that land rather of music than of Krupp guns, when a Sing Verein came back from some musical festival victorious, the whole city would be moved to frantic enthusiasm. Something of the same rapture, with a more fervent religious note in it, centres in the *kirtan*-companies that gather about a notable expounder of the teaching of the saints.

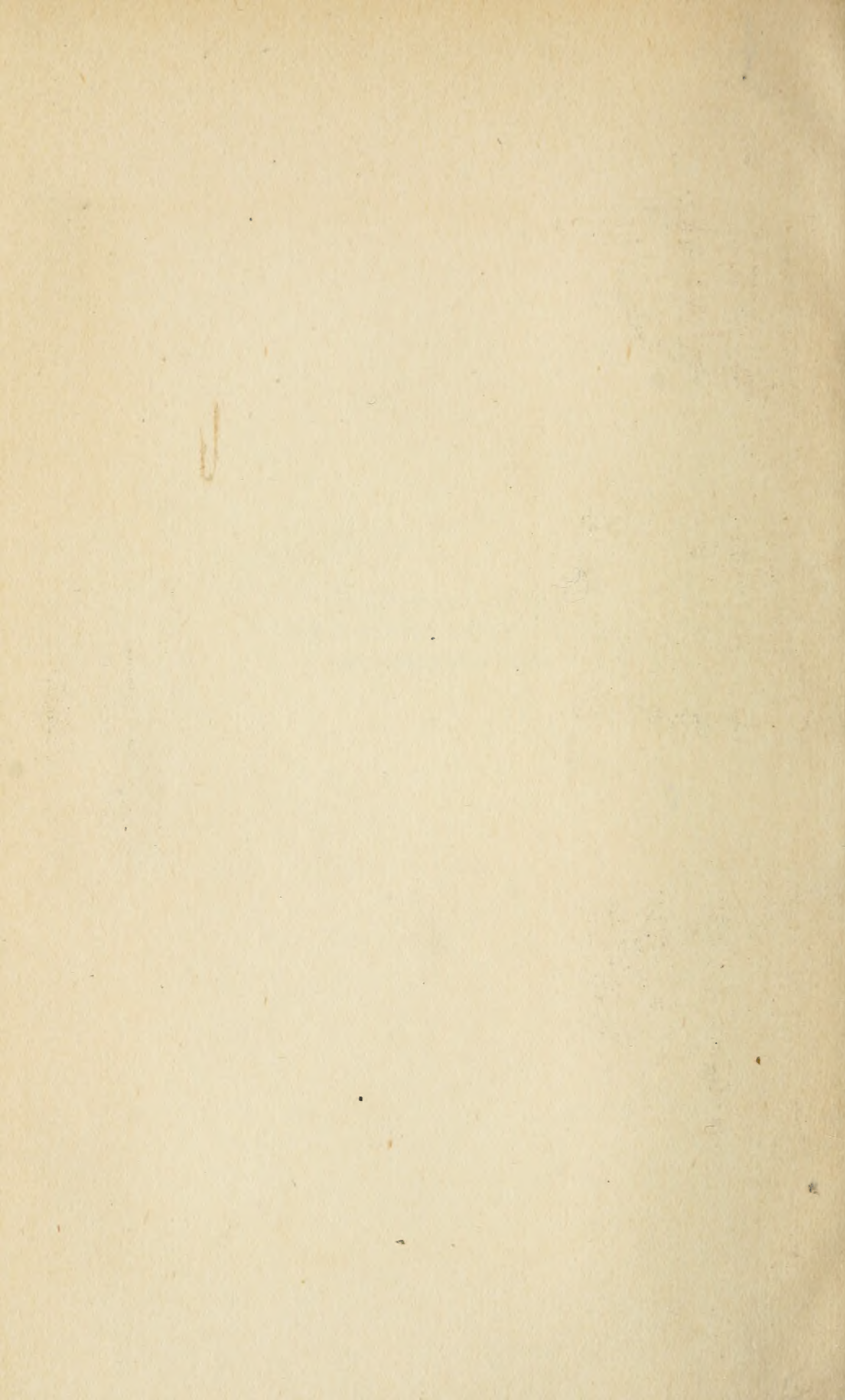
Sickness certainly is not a diversion in the commonly accepted meaning of the word. The sudden visitation of a strange disease spreading dismay and despair throughout the countryside, as influenza did some years ago, is a variation in the monotony of the villager's existence that he may well pray to be preserved from. Through all India one could hear in these fatal months, if one had ears attuned, 'Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted.' But some lesser visitations can be treated with a shrewd humour for which there was then no place. A disease has appeared of recent months among the village people which to them appears so new that they consider it to be something that the world upheaval of the war has impelled in their direction. It is, apparently, a mild fever, seldom, if ever, dangerous, that has passed from village to village, and often attacks every single dweller within the village bounds. They believe it to be caused by a Devī whom they call Baya, but they give her the special title of 'German Baya'. Surely of all the Devīs Durgā herself could not be more terrible than one to whom the title German is prefixed, and yet it is to this mild and harmless indisposition, not much more serious than the chicken-pox or the mumps, that the name of dread is given. Does this not indicate how completely the world-terror has been laid, and fallen to the level of a 'tattie-bogle'?

But the way in which this visitation has been transformed into a village diversion, so that 'out of the eater has come forth meat', has yet to be told. It has to be understood that a disease that is caused by a Devī is not to be treated like another disease. The method of procedure is, most commonly, to call in a *bhagat*, a person likely to have intimate relations with the deity concerned. Such a person often belongs to the outcastes or to the Kātkari hill people. He or she will be found presently to be possessed by the goddess that is causing the trouble; she will 'sport' in them, as they say, causing the medium to shiver and display other signs of possession. Then if one asks, 'Who are you?' the answer will be, 'I am the German Baya.' The medium next bids them give the patient gifts, which seem often in this case to take the harmless form of fruit—figs, oranges, plantains, guavas—but, as well, the more satisfying form of silver anklets and waist-belts and other articles of adornment. The poor *bhagat* does not profit by these gifts, which seems scarcely fair, but one is not surprised to learn that often the *bhagat's* services are dispensed with and the patient himself lays down to his friends the lines of this excellent method of treatment. A few days' fever is not a heavy price to pay for a fine silver belt or a gaily embroidered coat, to be worn on many a festival day thereafter. It is not therefore surprising that the visits of 'German Baya' are viewed as a not unpleasant diversion in the life of the village, and not as a serious calamity.

So long as the Indian villager has health and children in his home and a faithful wife he can live on and rejoice. But when the strokes of calamity deprive him of these, as they deprived Job, he does not indeed 'curse God and

die'; on the contrary, he often gives himself entirely to the service of God, becoming a homeless wanderer. He puts on, perhaps, the rosary of the Wārkari and finds his 'diversion' in praising the name of Viṭhobā. There is nothing that is rooted more deeply in the soul of the Indian peasant than his sense of God, and whatever else he loses with the coming to his land of a new day and with the wakening of new ambitions, he will not, we trust, lose this. Other lands, France, it may be, or Japan, can grow the harvest of the dragon's teeth, but not India. Śivaji, it is true, was a 'bonny fechter', but a day came when Śivaji placed his kingdom in the wallet of his *guru*, Rāmdās, and would have donned the yellow robe. We people of the West say with Sir Philip Sidney, 'I have never heard the old song of Percy and Douglas that I found not my heart moved as with a trumpet: and yet is it sung but by some blind crowder.' The song that the blind crowder sings in India is seldom a song of battle; it is a song of the soul's quest for God. All down the centuries from the dim days of Buddha India has sought Him sorrowing, and in the making of modern India they reckon ill that leave Him out.

PRINTED IN ENGLAND
AT THE OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
BY FREDERICK HALL



HIn
M1695m

196679

Author Macnicol, Nicol

Title The making of modern India.

University of Toronto
Library

DO NOT
REMOVE
THE
CARD
FROM
THIS
POCKET

Acme Library Card Pocket
Under Pat. "Ref. Index File"
Made by LIBRARY BUREAU